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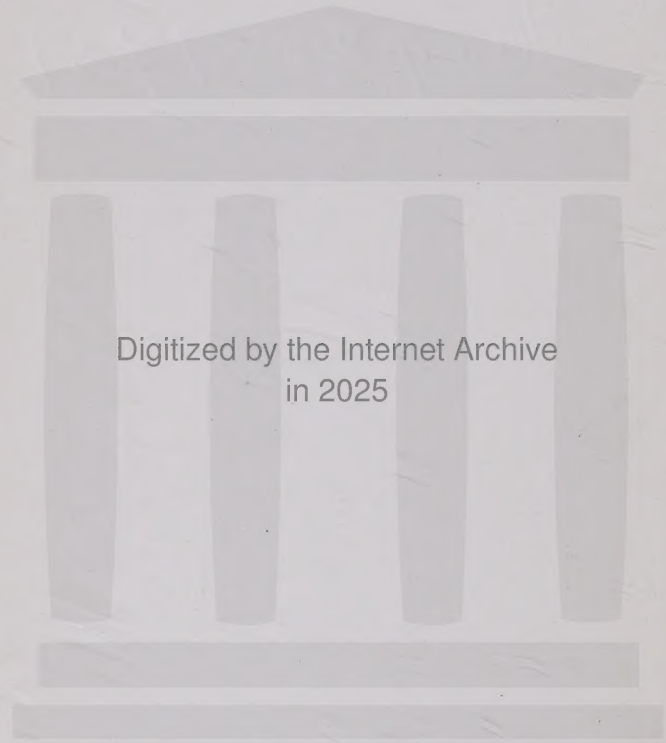
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LITTLE ESSAYS

Santayana, George
III

LITTLE ESSAYS

DRAWN FROM THE WRITINGS OF GEORGE SANTAYANA

BY

LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF THE AUTHOR

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Smith

PREFACE

THE origin and purpose of this book can be briefly stated. Ever since I became acquainted with Mr. Santayana's writings, I have been in the habit of taking up now and then one or another of his volumes, finding in them, among many things that, being no philosopher, I did not understand, much writing like that of the older essayists on large human subjects, which seemed to me more interesting and in many ways more important than anything I found in the works of other contemporary writers. I soon fell into the way of copying out the passages that I liked, and thus I gradually formed a collection of little essays on subjects of general interest—art and literature and religion, and the history of the human mind as it has manifested itself at various times and in the works of different men of genius. As most of Mr. Santayana's books have not been reprinted in England, and are hardly known to those on this side of the Atlantic who might be interested in them, it occurred to me that it might be worth while to print these little essays. I asked Mr. Santayana if he would permit me to do this, sending him my collection for his consideration and possible approval. I sent it to him with some misgiving, for I felt that it was rather an impertinent thing to cut up the life-work of a distinguished philosopher into a disconnected compilation of "elegant extracts." And then, as I re-read with more careful attention the books from which I had been making excerpts, I came to see that there

lay implicit in the material something of far greater significance, and that a much better use might be made of it. It became clear to me that the estimations and criticisms I had copied out were not mere personal and temperamental insights, but were bound up with, and dependent upon, a definite philosophy, a rational conception of the world and man's allotted place in it, which gave them a unity of interest and an importance far beyond that of any mere utterances of miscellaneous appreciation—any mere "adventures of the soul." Mr. Santayana is by race and temperament a representative of the Latin tradition: his mind is a Catholic one; it has been his aim to reconstruct our modern, miscellaneous, shattered picture of the world, and to build, not of clouds, but of the materials of this common earth, an edifice of thought, a fortress or temple for the modern mind, in which every natural impulse could find, if possible, its opportunity for satisfaction, and every ideal aspiration its shrine and altar. It was from this edifice of Reason that I had been taking the ornaments, and I now saw the much greater beauty they would have if they could appear in their appropriate setting. To sift, however, and rearrange these fragments, to reconstruct out of them some image in miniature of the original edifice from which I had detached them, was not a task for me to undertake—it could only be performed by the architect of the original building. Fortunately I succeeded in persuading Mr. Santayana to undertake this task; and while, therefore, the choice of these little essays is largely mine, their titles and order and arrangement, and the changes and omissions which have been made in the original texts are due, not to me, but to their author.

LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH.

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PART I

LITTLE ESSAYS ON HUMAN NATURE

I

SPIRIT THE JUDGE

MAN has a prejudice against himself: anything which is a product of his mind seems to him to be unreal or comparatively insignificant. We are satisfied only when we fancy ourselves surrounded by objects and laws independent of our nature. We have still to recognize in practice that from our despised feelings the great world of perception derives all its value. Things are interesting because we care about them, and important because we need them. Had our perceptions no connexion with our pleasures, we should soon close our eyes on this world; if our intelligence were of no service to our passions, we should come to doubt, in the lazy freedom of reverie, whether two and two make four.

Yet so strong is the popular sense of the unworthiness and insignificance of things purely emotional, that those who have taken moral problems to heart and felt their dignity have often been led into attempts to discover some external right and beauty of which our moral and æsthetic feelings should be perceptions or discoveries, just as our intellectual activity is a perception or discovery of external fact. These philosophers seem to feel that unless moral and æsthetic judgments are expressions of objective truth, and not merely expressions of human nature, they stand condemned of hopeless triviality. A judgment is not trivial, however, because it rests on human feelings; on the contrary, triviality consists in abstraction from human interests, of which the knowledge of truth is one, but one only; and the human judgments and opinions which are truly of little importance are those that wander beyond the range of moral economy, or have

no function in ordering and enriching the mind. The works of nature first acquire a meaning in the commentaries they provoke.

2

THE ORIGIN OF MORALS

Anthropology is a matter-of-fact record of the habits and passions of men. It is not the expression of any ideal; it does not specify any direction in which it demands that things should move. Yet it describes the situation which makes the existence of ideals possible and intelligible. Given the propulsive energy of life in any animal that is endowed with imagination, it is clear that whatever he finds propitious to his endeavours he will call good, and whatever he finds hostile to them he will call evil. His various habits and passions will begin to judge one another. A group of them called vanity, and another called taste, and another called conscience, will arise within his breast. Each of these groups, in so far as they have not coincided or co-operated from the beginning, will tend to annex or overcome the others. This competition between a man's passions makes up his moral history, the growth of his character, just as the competition of his ruling interests with other interests at work in society makes up his outward career. The sort of imagination that can survey all these interests at once, and can perceive how they check or support one another, is called reason; and when reason is vivid and powerful it gives courage and authority to those interests which it sees are destined to success, whilst it dampens or extinguishes those others which it sees are destined to failure. Reason thus establishes a sort of resigned and peaceful strength in the soul, founded on renunciation of what is impossible and co-operation with what is necessary.

Sense and each of the passions suffers from its initial independence. The disarray of human instincts lets every spontaneous motion run too far; life oscillates between constraint and unreason. Morality too often puts up with being a constraint and even imagines such

a disgrace to be its essence. Art, on the contrary, as often hugs unreason for fear of losing its inspiration, and forgets that it is itself a rational principle of creation and order. Morality is thus reduced to a necessary evil and art to a vain good, all for want of harmony among human impulses.

A creature like man, whose mode of being is a life or experience and not a congealed ideality, such as eternal truth might show, must find something to do; he must operate in an environment in which everything is not already what he is presently to make it. If all ends were already reached, and no art were requisite, life could not exist at all, much less a life of reason. Our deepest interest is after all to live, and we could not live if all acquisition, assimilation, government, and creation had been made impossible for us by their foregone realization, so that every operation was forestalled by the given fact. The distinction between the ideal and the real is one which the human ideal itself insists should be preserved.

In the actual world this first condition of life is only too amply fulfilled; the present difficulty in man's estate, the true danger to his vitality, lies not in want of work but in so colossal a disproportion between demand and opportunity that the ideal is stunned out of existence and perishes for want of hope. The life of reason is continually beaten back upon its animal sources, and nations are submerged in deluge after deluge of barbarism.

3

IDEALS

IDEALS are not forces; they are possible forms of being that would frankly express the will. These forms are invulnerable, eternal, and free; and he who finds them divine and congenial and is able to embody them at least in part and for a season, has to that extent transfigured life, turning it from a fatal process into a liberal art.

A supreme ideal of peace and perfection which moves the lover, and which moves the sky, is more easily named

than understood. The value of the notion to a poet or a philosopher does not lie in what it contains positively, but in the attitude it expresses. To have an ideal does not mean so much to have any image in the fancy, any Utopia more or less articulate, as rather to take a consistent moral attitude towards all the things of this world, to judge and coördinate our interests, to establish a hierarchy of goods and evils, and to value events and persons, not by a casual personal impression or instinct, but according to their real nature and tendency. So understood, an ultimate ideal is no mere vision of the philosophical dreamer, but the goal of a powerful and passionate force in the poet and the orator. It is the voice of his love or hate, of his hope or sorrow, idealizing, challenging, or condemning the world.

The ideal is itself a function of the reality and cannot therefore be altogether out of harmony with the conditions of its own birth and persistence. Civilization is precarious, but it need not be short-lived. Its inception is already a proof that there exists an equilibrium of forces which is favourable to its existence; and there is no reason to suppose this equilibrium to be less stable than that which keeps the planets revolving in their orbits.

4

INTELLECTUAL AMBITION

When we consider the situation of the human mind in nature, its limited plasticity and few channels of communication with the outer world, we need not wonder that we grope for light, or that we find incoherence and instability in human systems of ideas. The wonder rather is that we have done so well, that in the chaos of sensations and passions that fills the mind we have found any leisure for self-concentration and reflection, and have succeeded in gathering even a light harvest of experience from our distracted labours. Our occasional madness is less wonderful than our occasional sanity. Relapses into dreams are to be expected in a being whose brief existence is so like

a dream ; but who could have been sure of this sturdy and indomitable perseverance in the work of reason in spite of all checks and discouragements ?

The resources of the mind are not commensurate with its ambition. Of the five senses, three are of little use in the formation of permanent notions : a fourth, sight, is indeed vivid and luminous, but furnishes transcripts of things so highly coloured and deeply modified by the medium of sense, that a long labour of analysis and correction is needed before satisfactory conceptions can be extracted from it. For this labour, however, we are endowed with the requisite instrument. We have memory and we have certain powers of synthesis, abstraction, reproduction, invention,—in a word, we have understanding. But this faculty of understanding has hardly begun its work of deciphering the hieroglyphics of sense and framing an idea of reality, when it is crossed by another faculty—the imagination. Perceptions do not remain in the mind, as would be suggested by the trite simile of the seal and the wax, passive and changeless, until time wear off their sharp edges and make them fade. No, perceptions fall into the brain rather as seeds into a furrowed field or even as sparks into a keg of powder. Each image breeds a hundred more, sometimes slowly and subterraneously, sometimes (when a passionate train is started) with a sudden burst of fancy. The mind, exercised by its own fertility and flooded by its inner lights, has infinite trouble to keep a true reckoning of its outward perceptions. It turns from the frigid problems of observation to its own visions ; it forgets to watch the courses of what should be its " pilot stars." Indeed, were it not for the power of convention in which, by a sort of mutual cancellation of errors, the more practical and normal conceptions are enshrined, the imagination would carry men wholly away,—the best men first and the vulgar after them. Even as it is, individuals and ages of fervid imagination usually waste themselves in dreams, and must disappear before the race, saddened and dazed, perhaps, by the memory of those visions, can return to its plodding thoughts.

Five senses, then, to gather a small part of the infinite influences that vibrate in nature, a moderate power of

understanding to interpret those senses, and an irregular, passionate fancy to overlay that interpretation—such is the endowment of the human mind. And what is its ambition? Nothing less than to construct a picture of all reality, to comprehend its own origin and that of the universe, to discover the laws of both and prophesy their destiny. Is not the disproportion enormous? Are not confusions and profound contradictions to be looked for in an attempt to build so much out of so little?

5

THE SUPPRESSED MADNESS OF SANE MEN

PERCEPTION is no primary phase of consciousness; it is an ulterior function acquired by a dream which has become symbolic of its external conditions, and therefore relevant to its own destiny. Such relevance and symbolism are indirect and slowly acquired; their status cannot be understood unless we regard them as forms of imagination happily grown significant. In imagination, not in perception, lies the substance of experience, while science and reason are but its chastened and ultimate form.

Every actual animal is somewhat dull and somewhat mad. He will at times miss his signals and stare vacantly when he might well act, while at other times he will run off into convulsions and raise a dust in his own brain to no purpose. These imperfections are so human that we should hardly recognize ourselves if we could shake them off altogether. Not to retain any dulness would mean to possess untiring attention and universal interests, thus realizing the boast about deeming nothing human alien to us; while to be absolutely without folly would involve perfect self-knowledge and self-control. The intelligent man known to history flourishes within a dullard and holds a lunatic in leash. He is encased in a protective shell of ignorance and insensibility which keeps him from being exhausted and confused by this too complicated world; but that integument blinds him at the same time to many of his nearest and highest interests. He is amused

by the antics of the brute dreaming within his breast; he gloats on his passionate reveries, an amusement which sometimes costs him very dear. Thus the best human intelligence is still decidedly barbarous; it fights in heavy armour and keeps a fool at court.

If consciousness could ever have the function of guiding conduct better than instinct can, in the beginning it would be most incompetent for that office. Only the routine and equilibrium which healthy instinct involves keep thought and will at all within the limits of sanity. The predetermined interests we have as animals fortunately focus our attention on practical things, pulling it back, like a ball with an elastic cord, within the radius of pertinent matters. Instinct alone compels us to neglect and seldom to recall the irrelevant infinity of ideas. Philosophers have sometimes said that all ideas come from experience; they never could have been poets and must have forgotten that they were ever children. The great difficulty in education is to get experience out of ideas. Shame, conscience, and reason continually disallow and ignore what consciousness presents; and what are they but habit and latent instinct asserting themselves and forcing us to disregard our midsummer madness? Idiocy and lunacy are merely reversions to a condition in which present consciousness is in the ascendant and has escaped the control of unconscious forces. We speak of people being "out of their senses," when they have in fact fallen back into them; or of those who have "lost their mind," when they have lost merely that habitual control over consciousness which prevented it from flaring into all sorts of obsessions and agonies. Their bodies having become deranged, their minds, far from correcting that derangement, instantly share and betray it. A dream is always simmering below the conventional surface of speech and reflection. Even in the highest reaches and serenest meditations of science it sometimes breaks through. Even there we are seldom constant enough to conceive a truly natural world; somewhere passionate, fanciful, or magic elements will slip into the scheme and baffle rational ambition.

6

THE BIRTH OF REASON

REASON was born, as it has since discovered, into a world already wonderfully organized, in which it found its precursor in what is called life, its seat in an animal body of unusual plasticity, and its function in rendering the volatile instincts and sensations in that body harmonious with one another and with the outer world on which they depend. Reason has thus supervened at the last stage of an adaptation which had long been carried on by irrational and even unconscious processes. Nature preceded, with all that fixation of impulses and conditions which gives reason its tasks and its *point d'appui*.

The guide in early sensuous education is the same that conducts the whole life of reason, namely, impulse checked by experiment, and experiment judged again by impulse. What teaches the child to distinguish the nurse's breast from sundry blank or disquieting presences? What induces him to arrest that image, to mark its associates, and to recognize them with alacrity? The discomfort of its absence and the comfort of its possession. To that image is attached the chief satisfaction he knows, and the force of that satisfaction disentangles it before all other images from the feeble and fluid continuum of his life. What first awakens in him a sense of reality is what first is able to appease his unrest. Impulses to appropriate and to reject first teach us the points of the compass, and space itself, like charity, begins at home.

In order to begin at the beginning in the autobiography of mind, we must try to fall back on uninterpreted feeling, as the mystics aspire to do. We need not expect, however, to find peace there, for the immediate is in flux. It is not God but chaos; its nothingness is pregnant, restless, and brutish; it is that from which all our ideas of things emerge in so far as they have any permanence or value, so that to lapse into it again is a dull suicide and no salvation. Peace, which is after all what the mystic seeks, lies not in indistinction but in perfection. If he reaches

it in a measure himself, it is by the traditional discipline he still practises, not by his heats or his languors. The perturbed immediate finds or at least seeks its peace in reason, through which it comes in sight of some sort of ideal permanence. When the material flux manages to form an eddy and to maintain by breathing and nutrition what we call a life, it affords some slight foothold and object for thought and becomes in a measure like the ark in the desert, a moving habitation for the eternal. Life begins to have some value and continuity so soon as there is something definite that lives and something definite to live for.

The primacy of impulses, irrational in themselves but expressive of bodily functions, is observable in the behaviour of animals, and in those dreams, obsessions, and primary passions which in the midst of sophisticated life sometimes lay bare the obscure groundwork of human nature. Reason's work is there undone. We can observe sporadic growths, disjointed fragments of rationality, springing up in a moral wilderness. In the passion of love, for instance, a cause unknown to the sufferer, but which is doubtless the spring-flood of hereditary instincts accidentally let loose, suddenly checks the young man's gaiety, dispels his random curiosity, arrests perhaps his very breath ; and when he looks for a cause to explain his suspended faculties, he can find it only in the presence or image of another being, of whose character, possibly, he knows nothing and whose beauty may not be remarkable ; yet that image pursues him everywhere, and he is dominated by an unaccustomed tragic earnestness and a new capacity for suffering and joy. If the passion be strong there is no previous interest or duty that will be remembered before it ; if it be lasting the whole life may be reorganized by it ; it may impose new habits, other manners, and another religion. Yet what is the root of all this idealism ? An irrational instinct, normally intermittent, such as all dumb creatures share, which has here managed to dominate a human soul and to enlist all the mental powers in its more or less permanent service, upsetting their usual equilibrium. This madness, however, inspires method ; and for the first time, perhaps, in his life, the man has something to live for. The blind affinity that like a

magnet draws all the faculties round it, in so uniting them, suffuses them with an unwonted spiritual light.

Here, on a small scale and on a precarious foundation, we may see clearly illustrated and foreshadowed that life of reason which is simply the unity given to all existence by a mind *in love with the good.* In the higher reaches of human nature, as much as in the lower, rationality depends on distinguishing the excellent; and that distinction can be made, in the last analysis, only by an irrational impulse. As life is a better form given to force, by which the universal flux is subdued to create and serve a somewhat permanent interest, so reason is a better form given to interest itself, by which it is fortified and propagated, and ultimately, perhaps, assured of satisfaction. The substance to which this form is given remains irrational; so that rationality, like all excellence, is something secondary and relative, requiring a natural being to possess or to impute it. When definite interests are recognized and the values of things are estimated by that standard, action at the same time veering in harmony with that estimation, then reason has been born and a moral world has arisen.

7

THE DIFFERENCE REASON MAKES

If a dog, while sniffing about contentedly, sees afar off his master arriving after long absence, a new circle of sensations appears, with a new principle governing interest and desire; instead of waywardness subjection, instead of freedom love. But the poor brute asks for no reason why his master went, why he has come again, why he should be loved, or why presently while lying at his feet you forget him and begin to grunt and dream of the chase —all that is an utter mystery, utterly unconsidered. Such experience has variety, scenery, and a certain vital rhythm; its story might be told in dithyrambic verse. It moves wholly by inspiration; every event is providential, every act unpremeditated. Absolute freedom and absolute helplessness have met together: you depend

wholly on divine favour, yet that unfathomable agency is not distinguishable from your own life. This is the condition to which some forms of piety invite men to return; and it lies in truth not far beneath the level of ordinary human consciousness.

Systematic living is after all an experiment, as is the formation of animal bodies, and the inorganic pulp out of which these growths have come may very likely have had its own incommunicable values, its absolute thrills, which we vainly try to remember and to which, in moments of dissolution, we may half revert. Protoplasmic pleasures and strains may be the substance of consciousness; and as matter seeks its own level, and as the sea and the flat waste to which all dust returns have a certain primordial life and a certain sublimity, so all passions and ideas, when spent, may rejoin the basal note of feeling, and enlarge their volume as they lose their form. This loss of form may not be unwelcome, if it is the formless that, by anticipation, speaks through what is surrendering its being. Though to acquire or impart form is delightful in art, in thought, in generation, in government, yet a euthanasia of finitude is also known. All is not affectation in the poet who says, "Now more than ever seems it rich to die"; and, without any poetry or affectation, men may love sleep, and opiates, and every luxurious escape from humanity.

The path of reason is only one of innumerable courses perhaps open to existence, but it is the only one that human discourse is competent to trace. Madness, if pronounced, is precarious, but when speculative enough to be harmless or not deep enough to be debilitating, it may last for ever.

An imaginative life may therefore exist parasitically in a man, hardly touching his action or environment. There is no possibility of exorcizing these apparitions by their own power. A nightmare does not dispel itself; it endures until the organic strain which caused it is relaxed either by natural exhaustion or by some external influence. Therefore human ideas are still for the most part sensuous and trivial, shifting with the chance currents of the brain, and representing nothing, so to speak, but personal tem-

perature. Personal temperature, moreover, is sometimes tropical. There are brains like a South American jungle, as there are others like an Arabian desert, strewn with nothing but bones. While a passionate sultriness prevails in the mind there is no end to its luxuriance. Languages intricately articulate, flaming mythologies, metaphysical perspectives lost in infinity, arise in remarkable profusion. In time, however, there comes a change of climate and the whole forest disappears.

It is easy, from the standpoint of acquired practical competence, to deride a merely imaginative life. Derision, however, is not interpretation, and the better method of overcoming erratic ideas is to trace them out dialectically and see if they will not recognize their own fatuity. The most irresponsible vision has certain principles of order and valuation by which it estimates itself; and in these principles the life of reason is already broached, however halting may be its development. We should lead ourselves out of our dream, as the Israelites were led out of Egypt, by the promise and eloquence of that dream itself. Otherwise we might kill the goose that lays the golden egg, and by proscribing imagination abolish science.

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas, said a poet who stood near enough to fundamental human needs, and to the great answer which art and civilization can make to them, to value the life of reason and think it sublime. To discern causes is to turn vision into knowledge and motion into action. It is to fix the associates of things so that their respective transformations are collated, and they become significant of one another. The calm places in life are filled with power and the spasms with resource. No emotion can overwhelm the mind, for of none is the basis or issue wholly hidden; no event can disconcert it altogether, because it sees beyond. Means can be looked for to escape from the worst predicament; and whereas each moment had been formerly filled with nothing but its own adventure and surprised emotion, each now makes room for the lesson of what went before and surmises what may be the plot of the whole.

8

BODY AND MIND

NOTHING is more natural than that animals should feel and think. The relation of mind to body, of reason to nature, seems to be actually this: when bodies have reached a certain complexity and vital equilibrium, a sense begins to inhabit them which is focussed upon the preservation of that body and on its reproduction. To separate things so closely bound together as are mind and body, reason and nature, is a violent and artificial divorce, and a man of judgment will instinctively discredit any philosophy in which it is decreed. But to avoid divorce it is well first to avoid unnatural unions, and not to attribute to our two elements, which must be partners for life, relations repugnant to their respective natures and offices. Now the body is an instrument, the mind its function, the witness and reward of its operation. Mind is the entelechy of the body, a value which accrues to the body when it has reached a certain perfection, of which it would be a pity, so to speak, that it should remain unconscious; so that while the body feeds the mind the mind perfects the body, lifting it and all its natural relations and impulses into the moral world, into the sphere of interests and ideas.

No connexion could be closer than this reciprocal involution, as nature and life reveal it; but the connexion is natural, not dialectical. The union will be denaturalized and, so far as philosophy goes, actually destroyed, if we seek to carry it on into logical equivalence. If we isolate the terms mind and body and study the inward implications of each apart, we shall never discover the other. That matter cannot, by transposition of its particles, *become* what we call consciousness, is an admitted truth; that mind cannot *become* its own occasions or determine its own march, though it be a truth not recognized by all philosophers, is in itself no less obvious. Matter, dialectically studied, makes consciousness seem a superfluous and unaccountable addendum; mind, studied in the same way, makes nature an embarrassing idea, a figment

which ought to be subservient to conscious aims and perfectly transparent, but which remains opaque and overwhelming. In order to escape these sophistications, it suffices to revert to immediate observation and state the question in its proper terms: nature lives, and perception is a private echo and response to ambient motions. The mind gives voice to the impulses of the body; at their behest a man defines the world that sustains him and that conditions all his satisfactions. In discerning his origin he christens Nature by the eloquent name of mother, under which title she enters the universe of discourse. Simultaneously he discerns his own existence and marks off the inner region of his dreams. And it behooves him not to obliterate these discoveries. By trying to give his mind false points of attachment in nature he would disfigure not only nature but also that reason which is so much the essence of his life.

Consciousness, then, is the expression of bodily life and the seat of all its values. Its place in the natural world is like that of its own ideal products, art, religion, or science; it translates natural relations into synthetic and ideal symbols by which things are interpreted with reference to the interests of consciousness itself. This representation is also an existence and has its place along with all other existences in the bosom of nature. In this sense its connexion with its organs, and with all that affects the body or that the body affects, is a natural connexion. If the word cause did not suggest dialectical bonds we might innocently say that thought was a link in the chain of natural causes. It is at least a link in the chain of natural events; for it has determinate antecedents in the brain and senses and determinate consequents in actions and words. But this dependence and this efficacy have nothing logical about them; they are habitual collocations in the world, like lightning and thunder.

Whether consciousness accompanies vegetative life, or even all motion, is a point to be decided solely by empirical analogy. When the exact physical conditions of thought are discovered in man, we may infer how far thought is diffused through the universe, for it will be coextensive with the conditions it will have been shown

to have. Now, in a very rough way, we know already what these conditions are. They are first the existence of an organic body and then its possession of adaptable instincts, of instincts that can be modified by experience. This capacity is what an observer calls intelligence; docility is the observable half of reason. When an animal winces at a blow and readjusts his pose, we say he feels; and we say he thinks when we see him brooding over his impressions, and find him launching into a new course of action after a silent decoction of his potential impulses. Conversely, when observation covers both the mental and the physical process, that is, in our own experience, we find that felt impulses, the conceived objects for which they make, and the values they determine are all correlated with animal instincts and external impressions. A desire is the inward sign of a physical proclivity to act, an image in sense is the sign in most cases of some material object in the environment and always, we may presume, of some cerebral change. The brain seems to simmer like a caldron in which all sorts of matters are perpetually transforming themselves into all sorts of shapes. When this cerebral reorganization is pertinent to the external situation and renders the man, when he resumes action, more a master of his world, the accompanying thought is said to be practical; for it brings a consciousness of power and an earnest of success.

Cerebral processes are of course largely hypothetical. Theory suggests their existence, and experience can verify that theory only in an indirect and imperfect manner. The addition of a physical substratum to all thinking is only a scientific expedient, a hypothesis expressing the faith that nature is mechanically intelligible even beyond the reaches of minute verification. On the other hand, to add a mental phase to every part and motion of the cosmos is an audacious fancy. It violates all empirical analogy, for the phenomenon which feeling accompanies in crude experience is not mere material existence, but reactive organization and docility.

The limits set to observation, however, render the mental and material spheres far from coincident, and even in a rough way mutually supplementary, so that human

reflection has fallen into a habit of interlarding them. The world, instead of being a living body, a natural system with moral functions, has seemed to be a bisectible hybrid, half material and half mental, the clumsy conjunction of an automaton with a ghost. If philosophers of the Cartesian school had taken to heart, as the German transcendentalists did, the *cogito ergo sum* of their master, and had considered that a physical world is, for knowledge, nothing but an instrument to explain sensations and their order, they might have expected the collapse of half their metaphysics at the approach of their positive science: for if mental existence was to be kept standing only by its supposed causal efficacy nothing could prevent the whole world from becoming presently a *bête machine*. Psychic events have no links save through their organs and their objects; the function of the material world is, indeed, precisely to supply their linkage. The internal relations of ideas, on the other hand, are dialectical; their realm is eternal and absolutely irrelevant to the march of events. If we must speak, therefore, of causal relations between mind and body, we should say that matter is the pervasive cause of the distribution of mind, and mind the pervasive cause of the discovery and value of matter. To ask for an efficient cause, to trace back a force or investigate origins, is to have already turned one's face in the direction of matter and mechanical laws: no success in that undertaking can fail to be a triumph for materialism. To ask for a justification, on the other hand, is to turn no less resolutely in the direction of ideal results and actualities from which instrumentality and further use have been eliminated. Spirit is useless, being the end of things: but it is not vain, since it alone rescues all else from vanity. It is called practical when it is prophetic of its own better fulfilments, which is the case whenever forces are being turned to good uses, whenever an organism is exploring its relations and putting forth new tentacles with which to grasp the world.

9
THE SELF

WHAT we call ourselves is a certain cycle of vegetative processes, bringing a round of familiar impulses and ideas; this stream has a general direction, a conscious vital inertia, in harmony with which it moves. Many of the developments within it are dialectical; that is, they go forward by inner necessity, like an egg hatching within its shell, warmed but undisturbed by an environment of which they are wholly oblivious; and this sort of growth, when there is adequate consciousness of it, is felt to be both absolutely obvious and absolutely free. The emotion that accompanies it is pleasurable, but is too active and proud to call itself a pleasure; it has rather the quality of assurance and right. This part of life, however, is only its courageous core; about it play all sorts of incidental processes, allying themselves to it in more or less congruous movement. Whatever peripheral events fall in with the central impulse are lost in its energy and felt to be not so much peripheral and accidental as inwardly grounded, being, like the stages of a prosperous dialectic, spontaneously demanded and instantly justified when they come.

Man is as full of potentiality as he is of impotence. A will in harmony with many active forces, and skilful in divination and augury, may long profess to be almighty without being contradicted by the event. The sphere of the self's power is accordingly, for primitive estimation, simply the sphere of what happens well; it is the entire unoffending and obedient part of the world. A man who has good luck at dice prides himself upon it, and believes that to have it is his destiny and desert. If his luck were absolutely constant, he would say he had the *power* to throw high; and as the event would, by hypothesis, sustain his boast, there would be no practical error in that assumption. A will that never found anything to thwart it would think itself omnipotent; and as the psychological essence of omniscience is not to suspect there is anything which you do not know, so the psychological essence of omnipotence is not to suspect that anything can happen

which you do not desire. Such claims would undoubtedly be made if experience lent them the least colour; but would even the most comfortable and innocent assurances of this sort cease to be precarious? Might not any moment of eternity bring the unimagined contradiction, and shake the dreaming god?

10

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, VANITY, AND FAME

IDEAL society is a drama enacted exclusively in the imagination. Its personages are all mythical, beginning with that brave protagonist who calls himself I and speaks all the soliloquies. When most nearly material these personages are human souls—the ideal life of particular bodies—or floating mortal reputations—echoes of those ideal lives in one another. From this relative substantiality they fade into notions of country, posterity, humanity, and the gods. These figures all represent some circle of events or forces in the real world; but such representation, besides being mythical, is usually most inadequate. The boundaries of that province which each spirit presides over are vaguely drawn, the spirit itself being correspondingly indefinite. This ambiguity is most conspicuous, perhaps, in the most absorbing of the personages which a man constructs in this imaginative fashion—his idea of himself. "There is society where none intrudes"; and for most men sympathy with their imaginary selves is a powerful and dominant emotion. True memory offers but a meagre and interrupted vista of past experience, yet even that picture is far too rich a term for mental discourse to bandy about; a name with a few physical and social connotations is what must represent the man to his own thinkings. Or rather it is no memory, however eviscerated, that fulfils that office. A man's notion of himself is a figment in discourse for which his more constant bodily feelings, his ruling interests, and his social relations furnish most of the substance.

The more reflective and self-conscious a man is the more completely will his experience be subsumed and absorbed in his perennial "I." If philosophy has come

to reinforce this reflective egotism, he may even regard all nature as nothing but his half-voluntary dream and encourage himself thereby to give even to the physical world a dramatic and sentimental colour. But the more successful he is in stuffing everything into his self-consciousness, the more desolate will the void become which surrounds him. For self is, after all, but one term in a primitive dichotomy and would lose its specific and intimate character were it no longer contrasted with anything else. The egoist must therefore people the desert he has spread about him, and he naturally peoples it with mythical counterparts of himself. Sometimes, if his imagination is sensuous, his alter-egos are incarnate in the landscape, and he creates a poetic mythology; sometimes, when the inner life predominates, they are projected into his own forgotten past or infinite future. He will then say that all experience is really his own and that some inexplicable illusion has momentarily raised opaque partitions in his omniscient mind.

Philosophers less pretentious and more worldly than these have sometimes felt, in their way, the absorbing force of self-consciousness. La Rochefoucauld could describe *amour propre* as the spring of all human sentiments. *Amour propre* involves preoccupation not merely with the idea of self, but with that idea reproduced in other men's minds; the soliloquy has become a dialogue, or rather a solo with an echoing chorus. Interest in one's own social figure is to some extent a material interest, for other men's love or aversion is a principle read into their acts; and a social animal like man is dependent on other men's acts for his happiness. An individual's concern for the attitude society takes toward him is therefore in the first instance concern for his own practical welfare. But imagination here refines upon worldly interest. What others think of us would be of little moment did it not, when known, so deeply tinge what we think of ourselves. Nothing could better prove the mythical character of self-consciousness than this extreme sensitiveness to alien opinions; for if a man really knew himself he would utterly despise the ignorant notions others might form on a subject in which he had such

matchless opportunities for observation. Indeed, those opinions would hardly seem to him directed upon the reality at all, and he would laugh at them as he might at the stock fortune-telling of some itinerant gypsy.

As it is, however, the least breath of irresponsible and anonymous censure lashes our self-esteem and sometimes quite transforms our plans and affections. The passions grafted on wounded pride are the most inveterate; they are green and vigorous in old age. We crave support in vanity, as we do in religion, and never forgive contradictions in that sphere; for however persistent and passionate such prejudices may be, we know too well that they are woven of thin air. A hostile word, by starting a contrary imaginative current, buffets them rudely and threatens to dissolve their being.

The highest form of vanity is love of fame. It is a passion easy to deride but hard to understand, and in men who live at all by imagination almost impossible to eradicate. The good opinion of posterity can have no possible effect on our fortunes, and the practical value which reputation may temporarily have is quite absent in posthumous fame. The direct object of this passion—that a name should survive in men's mouths to which no adequate idea of its original can be attached—seems a thin and fantastic satisfaction, especially when we consider how little we should probably sympathize with the creatures that are to remember us. What comfort would it be to Virgil that boys still read him at school, or to Pindar that he is sometimes mentioned in a world from which everything he loved has departed? Yet, beneath this desire for nominal longevity, apparently so inane, there may lurk an ideal ambition of which the ancients cannot have been unconscious when they set so high a value on fame. They often identified fame with immortality, a subject on which they had far more rational sentiments than have since prevailed.

Fame, as a noble mind conceives and desires it, is not embodied in a monument, a biography, or the repetition of a strange name by strangers; it consists in the immortality of a man's work, his spirit, his efficacy, in the perpetual rejuvenation of his soul in the world. When Horace—no model of magnanimity—wrote his *exegi*

monumentum, he was not thinking that the pleasure he would continue to give would remind people of his trivial personality, which indeed he never particularly celebrated and which had much better lie buried with his bones. He was thinking, of course, of that pleasure itself; thinking that the delight, half lyric, half sarcastic, which those delicate cameos had given him to carve would be perennially renewed in all who retraced them. Nay, perhaps we may not go too far in saying that even that impersonal satisfaction was not the deepest he felt; the deepest, very likely, flowed from the immortality, not of his monument, but of the subject and passion it commemorated; that tenderness, I mean, and that disillusion with mortal life which rendered his verse immortal. He had expressed, and in expressing appropriated, some recurring human moods, some mocking renunciations; and he knew that his spirit was immortal, being linked and identified with that portion of the truth. He had become a little spokesman of humanity, uttering what all experience repeats more or less articulately; and even if he should cease to be honoured in men's memories, he would continue to be unwittingly honoured and justified in their lives.

What we may conceive to have come in this way even within the apprehension of Horace is undoubtedly what has attached many nobler souls to fame. With an inversion of moral derivations which all mythical expression involves we speak of fame as the reward of genius, whereas in truth genius, the imaginative dominion over experience, is its own reward and fame is but a foolish image by which its worth is symbolized. When the Virgin in the Magnificat says, "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," the psalmist surely means to express a spiritual exaltation exempt from vanity; he merely translates into a rhetorical figure the fact that what had been first revealed to Mary would also bless all generations. That the church should in consequence deem and pronounce her blessed is an incident describing, but not creating, the unanimity in their religious joys. Fame is thus the outward sign or recognition of an inward representative authority residing in genius or good fortune, an authority in which lies the whole worth of fame. Those will sub-

stantially remember and honour us who keep our ideals, and we shall live on in those ages whose experience we have anticipated.

II

FALSE MORAL PERSPECTIVES

Sea-sickness and child-birth when they are over, the pangs of despised love when that love is dead or requited, the travail of sin when once salvation is assured, all melt away and dissolve like a morning mist leaving a clear sky without a vestige of sorrow. So also with merely remembered and not reproducible pleasures ; the buoyancy of youth, when absurdity was not yet tedious, the rapture of sport or passion, the immense peace found in a mystical surrender to the universal, all these generous ardours count for nothing when they are once gone. The memory of them cannot cure a fit of the blues nor raise an irritable mortal above some petty act of malice or vengeance, or reconcile him to foul weather. An ode of Horace, on the other hand, a scientific monograph, or a well-written page of music is a better antidote to melancholy than thinking on all the happiness which one's own life or that of the universe may ever have contained. Why should overwhelming masses of suffering and joy affect imagination so little while it responds sympathetically to æsthetic and intellectual irritants of very slight intensity, objects that, it must be confessed, are of almost no importance to the welfare of mankind ? Why should we be so easily awed by artistic genius and exalt men whose works we know only by name, perhaps, and whose influence upon society has been infinitesimal, like a Pindar or a Leonardo, while we regard great merchants and inventors as ignoble creatures in comparison ? There is a prodigious selfishness in dreams : they live perfectly deaf and invulnerable amid the cries of the real world.

Utilitarians have attempted to show that the human conscience commends precisely those actions which tend to secure general happiness and that the notions of justice and virtue prevailing in any age vary with its social economy and the prizes it is able to attain. And, if due allowance

is made for the complexity of the subject, we may reasonably admit that the precepts of obligatory morality bear this relation to the general welfare; thus virtue means courage in a soldier, probity in a merchant, and chastity in a woman. But if we turn from the morality required of all to the type regarded as perfect and ideal, we find no such correspondence to the benefits involved. The selfish imagination intervenes here and attributes an absolute and irrational value to those figures that entertain it with the most absorbing and dreamful emotions. The character of Christ, for instance, which even the least orthodox among us are in the habit of holding up as a perfect model, is not the character of a benefactor but of a martyr, a spirit from a higher world lacerated in its passage through this uncomprehending and perverse existence, healing and forgiving out of sheer compassion, sustained by his inner affinities to the supernatural, and absolutely disenchanted with all earthly or political goods. Christ did not suffer, like Prometheus, for having bestowed or wished to bestow any earthly blessing: the only blessing he bequeathed was the image of himself upon the cross, whereby men might be comforted in their own sorrows, rebuked in their worldliness, driven to put their trust in the supernatural, and united, by their common indifference to the world, in one mystic brotherhood. As men learned these lessons, or were inwardly ready to learn them, they recognized more and more clearly in Jesus their heaven-sent redeemer, and in following their own conscience and desperate idealism into the desert or the cloister, in ignoring all civic virtues and allowing the wealth, art, and knowledge of the pagan world to decay, they began what they felt to be an imitation of Christ.

It appears that the great figures of art or religion, together with all historic and imaginative ideals, advance insensibly on the values they represent. The image has more lustre than the original, and is often the more important and influential fact. A *memorable thing*, people say in their eulogies, little thinking to touch the ground of their praise. For things are called great because they are memorable, they are not remembered because they were great. Fortunate indeed was Achilles that Homer

sang of him, and fortunate the poets that make a public titillation out of their sorrows and ignorance. The favours of memory are extended to those feeble realities and denied to the massive substance of daily experience. When life dies, when what was present becomes a memory, its ghost flits still among the living, feared or worshipped not for the experience it once possessed but for the aspect it now wears. Yet this injustice in representation, speculatively so offensive, is practically excusable; for it is in one sense right and useful that all things, whatever their original or inherent dignity, should be valued at each moment only by their present function and utility.

The error involved in attributing values to the past is naturally aggravated when values are to be assigned to the future. In this case imagination cannot be controlled by circumstantial evidence, and is consequently the only basis for judgment. But as the conception of a thing naturally evokes an emotion different from that involved in its presence, ideals of what is desirable for the future contain no warrant that the experience desired would, when actual, prove to be acceptable and good. An ideal carries no extrinsic assurance that its realization would be a benefit. To convince ourselves that an ideal has rational authority and represents a better experience than the actual condition it is contrasted with, we must control the prophetic image by as many circumlocutions as possible. We must buttress or modify our spontaneous judgment with all the other judgments that the object envisaged can prompt. The possible error remains even then; but a practical mind will always accept the risk of error when it has made every possible correction. The rationality possible to the will lies not in its source but in its method. An ideal cannot wait for its realization to prove its validity. To deserve allegiance it needs only to express completely what the soul at present demands, and to do justice to all extant interests. That life is worth living is the most necessary of assumptions and, were it not assumed, the most impossible of conclusions. Experience by its dead weight of joy and sorrow can neither inspire nor prevent enthusiasm; only a living ideal will avail to attract the will and, if realized, to satisfy it.

12

PAIN

THE utility of pain lies in the warning it gives: in trying to escape pain we escape destruction. That we desire to escape pain is certain; its very definition can hardly go beyond the statement that pain is that element of feeling which we seek to abolish on account of its intrinsic quality. That this desire, however, should know how to initiate remedial action is a notion contrary to experience and in itself unthinkable. If pain could have cured us we should long ago have been saved. The bitterest quintessence of pain is its helplessness, and our incapacity to abolish it. The most intolerable torments are those we feel gaining upon us, intensifying and prolonging themselves indefinitely. This baffling quality, so conspicuous in extreme agony, is present in all pain and is perhaps its essence. If we sought to describe by a circumlocution what is of course a primary sensation, we might scarcely do better than to say that pain is consciousness at once intense and empty, fixing attention on what contains no character, and arrests all satisfactions without offering anything in exchange. The horror of pain lies in its intolerable intensity and its intolerable tedium. It can accordingly be cured either by sleep or by entertainment. In itself it has no resource; its violence is quite helpless and its vacancy offers no expedients by which it might be unknotted and relieved.

13

WHAT PEOPLE WILL PUT UP WITH

THERE is nothing to which men, while they have food and drink, cannot reconcile themselves. They will put up with present suffering, with the certainty of death, with solitude, with shame, with wrong, with the expectation of eternal damnation. In the face of such things,

they can not only be merry for the moment, but solemnly thank God for having brought them into existence. Habit is stronger than reason, and the respect for fact stronger than the respect for the ideal; nor would the ideal and reason ever prevail did they not make up in persistence what they lack in momentary energy.

14

ADVANTAGE OF A LONG CHILDHOOD

Had all intelligence been developed in the womb, as it might have been, nothing essential could have been learned afterwards. Mankind would have contained nothing but doctrinaires, and the arts would have stood still for ever. Those human races which are most precocious are most incorrigible and, while they seem the cleverest at first, prove ultimately the least intelligent. In some nations everybody is by nature so astute, versatile, and sympathetic that education hardly makes any difference in manners or mind; and it is there precisely that generation follows generation without essential progress, and no one ever remakes himself on a better plan. Structure preformed is formed blindly; the *a priori* is as dangerous in life as in philosophy. Only the cruel workings of compulsion and extermination keep what is spontaneous in any creature harmonious with the world it is called to live in. Nothing but casual variations could permanently improve such a creature; and casual variations will seldom improve it.

To be born half-made is an immense advantage. If experience can co-operate in forming instincts, and if human nature can be partly a work of art, mastery can be carried quickly to much greater lengths. This is the secret of man's pre-eminence. His liquid brain is unfit for years to control action advantageously. He has an age of play which is his apprenticeship; and he is formed unawares by a series of selective experiments, of curious gropings, while he is still under tutelage and suffers little by his mistakes. It is perhaps the duller races, with a

long childhood and a brooding mind, that bear the hopes of the world within them, if only nature avails to execute what she has planned on so great a scale.

15

THE TRANSITIVE FORCE OF KNOWLEDGE

Intelligence is no compulsory possession; and while some of us would gladly have more of it, others find that they already have too much. The tension of thought distresses them and to represent what they cannot and would not be is not a natural function of their spirit. But knowledge is not eating, and we cannot expect to devour and possess *what we mean*. Knowledge is recognition of something absent; it is a salutation, not an embrace. Consciousness is the least ideal of things when reason is taken out of it, and we cannot cease to think and still continue to know. What you call the evidence of sense is pure confidence in reason. You would not be so idiotic as to see no meaning in your sensations; you will not pin your faith so unimaginatively on momentary appearance as to deny that the world exists when you stop thinking about it. You feel that your intellect has wider scope and has discovered many a thing that goes on behind the scenes, many a secret that would escape a stupid and gaping observation. It is the fool that looks to look and stops at the barely visible: you not only look but *see*; for you understand. And intelligence loves to perceive; water is not more grateful to a parched throat than a principle of comprehension to a confused understanding. Intelligence is most at home in the ultimate, which is the object of intent. Those realities which it can trust and continually recover are its familiar and beloved companions. The mists that may originally have divided it from them, and which psychologists call the mind, are gladly forgotten so soon as intelligence avails to pierce them, and as friendly communication can be established with the real world.

16

KNOWLEDGE OF NATURE IS SYMBOLIC

The life of reason is no fair reproduction of the universe, but the expression of man alone. A theory of nature is nothing but a mass of observations, made with a hunter's and an artist's eye. A mortal has no time for sympathy with his victim or his model; and, beyond a certain range, he has no capacity for such sympathy. As in order to live he must devour one-half the world and disregard the other, so in order to think and practically to know he must deal summarily and selfishly with his materials; otherwise his intellect would melt again into endless and irrevocable dreams. Much of what is valued in science and religion is not lodged in the miscellany underlying these creations of reason, but is lodged rather in the rational activity itself, and in the intrinsic beauty of all symbols bred in a genial mind. Of course, if these symbols had no real points of reference, if they were symbols of nothing, they could have no great claim to consideration and no rational character; at most they would be agreeable images. They are, however, at their best good symbols for diffused facts having a certain order and tendency; they render that reality with a difference, reducing it to a formula or a myth, in which its tortuous length and trivial detail can be surveyed to advantage without undue waste or fatigue. Symbols may thus become eloquent, vivid, important, being endowed with both poetic grandeur and practical truth.

The facts from which this truth is borrowed, if they were rehearsed unimaginatively, in their own flat infinity, would be far from arousing the same emotions. The human eye sees in perspective; its glory would vanish were it reduced to a crawling, exploring antenna. Not that it loves to falsify anything. That to the worm the landscape might possess no light and shade, that the atomic structure of a mountain should be unpicturable, cannot distress the landscape gardener nor the poet; what concerns them is the effect such things may produce in the human fancy, so that the soul may live in a congenial world.

Naturalist and prophet are landscape painters on canvases of their own; each is interested in his own perception and perspective, which, if he takes the trouble to reflect, need not deceive him about what the world would be if not foreshortened in that particular manner. This special interpretation is nevertheless precious and shows up the world in that light in which it interests naturalists or prophets to see it. Their figments make their chosen world, as the painter's apperceptions are the breath of his nostrils.

While the relevance of the symbol is essential to its worth—since otherwise science would be inapplicable and religion demoralizing—its power and fascination lie in acquiring a more and more profound affinity to the human mind, so long as it can do so without surrendering its relevance to the facts of nature.

The function of history or of criticism is not passively to reproduce its subject-matter. One real world is enough. Reflection and description are things superadded, things which ought to be more winged and more selective than what they play upon. They are echoes of reality in the sphere of art, sketches which may achieve all the truth appropriate to them without belying their creative limitations: for their essence is to be intellectual symbols, at once indicative and original.

The circumstances of life are only the bases or instruments of life: the fruition of life is not in retrospect, not in description of the instruments, but in expression of the spirit itself, to which those instruments may prove useful; as music is not a criticism of violins, but a playing upon them. This expression need not resemble its ground. Experience is diversified by colours that are not produced by colours, sounds that are not conditioned by sounds, names that are not symbols for other names, fixed ideal objects that stand for ever-changing material processes. The mind is fundamentally lyrical, inventive, redundant. Its visions are its own offspring, hatched in the warmth of some favourable cosmic gale. The ambient weather may vary, and these visions be scattered; but the ideal world they pictured may some day be revealed again to some other poet similarly inspired; the possibility of

restoring it, or something like it, is perpetual. Perhaps human life is not all life, nor the landscape of earth the only admired landscape in the universe; perhaps the ancients who believed in gods and spirits were nearer the virtual truth (however anthropomorphically they may have expressed themselves) than any philosophy or religion that makes human affairs the centre and aim of the world. Such moral imagination is to be gained by sinking into oneself, rather than by observing remote happenings, because it is at its heart, not at its finger-tips, that the human soul touches matter, and is akin to whatever other centres of life may people the infinite.

17

RELATIVITY OF SCIENCE

SCIENCE is nothing but developed perception, interpreted intent, common-sense rounded out and minutely articulated. It is therefore as much an instinctive product, as much a stepping forth of human courage in the dark, as is any inevitable dream or impulsive action. Like life itself, like any form of determinate existence, it is altogether autonomous and unjustifiable from the outside. It must lean on its own vitality; to sanction reason there is only reason, and to corroborate sense there is nothing but sense. Inferential thought is a venture not to be approved of, save by a thought no less venturesome and inferential. This is once for all the fate of a living being—it is the very essence of spirit—to be ever on the wing, borne by inner forces toward goals of its own imagining, confined to a passing apprehension of a represented world. Mind, which calls itself the organ of truth, is a permanent possibility of error. The encouragement and corroboration which science is alleged to receive from moment to moment may, for aught it knows, be simply a more ingenious self-deception, a form of that cumulative illusion by which madness can confirm itself, creating a whole world, with an endless series of martyrs, to bear witness to its sanity.

To insist on this situation may seem idle, since no positive doctrine can gain thereby in plausibility, and no

particular line of action in reasonableness. Yet this transcendental exercise, this reversion to the immediate, may be recommended by way of a cathartic, to free the mind from ancient obstructions and make it hungrier and more agile in its rational faith. Scepticism is harmless when it is honest and universal; it clears the air and is a means of reorganizing belief on its natural foundations. Belief is an inevitable accompaniment of practice and intent, both of which it will cling to all the more closely after a thorough criticism. When all beliefs are challenged together, the just and necessary ones have a chance to step forward and to re-establish themselves alone. The doubt cast on science, when it is an ingenuous and impartial doubt, will accordingly serve to show what sort of thing science is, and to establish it on a sure foundation. Science will then be seen to be tentative, genial, practical, and humane, full of ideality and pathos, like every great human undertaking.

Reason is not indispensable to life, nor needful if living anyhow be the sole and indeterminate aim; as the existence of animals and of most men sufficiently proves. In so far as man is not a rational being and does not live in and by the mind, in so far as his chance volitions and dreamful ideas roll by without mutual representation or adjustment, in so far as his instinct takes the lead and even his galvanized action is a form of passivity, he may eschew science and say that life is not intellectual. Yet reason has the indomitable persistence of all natural tendencies; it returns to the attack as waves beat on the shore. To observe its defeat is already to give it a new embodiment.

18

MATHEMATICS AND MORALS

MATHEMATICS, if it were nothing more than a pleasure, might conceivably become a vice. Those addicted to it might be indulging an atavistic taste at the expense of their humanity. It would then be in the position now occupied by mythology and mysticism. Even as it is, mathematicians share with musicians a certain partiality

in their characters and mental development. Masters in one abstract subject, they may remain children in the world; exquisite manipulators of the ideal, they may be erratic and clumsy in their earthly ways. Immense as are the uses and wide the applications of mathematics, its texture is too thin and inhuman to employ the whole mind or render it harmonious. It is a science which Socrates rejected for its supposed want of utility; but perhaps he had another ground in reserve to justify his humorous prejudice. He may have felt that such a science, if admitted, would endanger his thesis about the identity of virtue and knowledge.

19

MIND-READING

THE miracle of insight into another mind, as it must seem to those who have not understood its natural and accidental origin, extends only to the limits of similar structure and common occupation, so that the distortion of insight begins very near home. It begins with constitutional divergence and deteriorates rapidly into false imputations and absurd myths. It is hard to understand the minds of children unless we retain unusual plasticity and capacity to play; men and women do not really understand each other, what rules between them being not so much sympathy as habitual trust, idealization, or satire; foreigners' minds are pure enigmas, and those attributed to animals are a grotesque compound of Æsop and physiology. When we come to religion the ineptitude of all the feelings attributed to nature or the gods is so egregious that a sober critic can look to such fables only for a pathetic expression of human sentiment and need; while, even apart from the gods, each religion itself is quite unintelligible to infidels who have never followed its worship sympathetically or learned by contagion the human meaning of its sanctions and formulas.

Language is an artificial means of establishing unanimity and transferring thought from one mind to another. Every symbol or phrase, like every gesture, throws the observer

into an attitude to which a certain idea corresponded in the speaker; to fall exactly into the speaker's attitude is exactly to understand. Every impediment to contagion and imitation in expression is an impediment to comprehension. For this reason language, like all art, becomes pale with years; words and figures of speech lose their contagious and suggestive power. Even the most inspired verse becomes in the course of ages a scarcely legible hieroglyphic; the language it was written in dies; a learned education and an imaginative effort are requisite to catch even a vestige of its original force. Nothing is so irrevocable as mind.

There is evidently one case, however, in which the pathetic fallacy is not fallacious, the case in which the object observed happens to be an animal similar to the observer and similarly affected, as for instance when a flock or herd are swayed by panic fear. The emotion which each as he runs attributes to the others is, as usual, the emotion he feels himself in imitating them; but this emotion, fear, is the same which in fact the others are then feeling. Their aspect thus becomes the recognized expression for the feeling which really accompanies it. So in hand-to-hand fighting: the intention and passion which each imputes to the other is what he himself feels; but the imputation is probably just, since pugnacity is a remarkably contagious and monotonous passion. It is awakened by the slightest hostile suggestion and is greatly intensified by example and emulation; those we fight against and those we fight with arouse it concurrently, and the universal battle-cry that fills the air, and that each man instinctively emits, is an adequate and exact symbol for what is passing in all their souls.

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KNOWLEDGE OF CHARACTER

It is a mark of the connoisseur to be able to read character and habit and to divine at a glance all a creature's potentialities. This sort of penetration characterizes the man

with an eye for horse-flesh, the dog-fancier, and men and women of the world. It guides the born leader in the judgments he instinctively passes on his subordinates and enemies; it distinguishes every good judge of human affairs or of natural phenomena, who is quick to detect small but telling indications of events past or brewing. As the weather-prophet reads the heavens so the man of experience reads other men. Nothing concerns him less than their consciousness; he can allow that to run itself off when he is sure of their temper and habits. A great master of affairs is usually unsympathetic. His observation is not in the least dramatic or dreamful; he does not yield himself to animal contagion or re-enact other people's inward experience. He is too busy for that, and too intent on his own purposes. His observation, on the contrary, is straight calculation and inference, and it sometimes reaches truths about people's character and destiny which they themselves are very far from divining. Such apprehension is masterful and odious to weaklings, who think they know themselves because they indulge in copious soliloquy (which is the discourse of brutes and madmen), but who really know nothing of their own capacity, situation, or fate.

If Rousseau, for instance, after writing those Confessions in which candour and ignorance of self are equally conspicuous, had heard some intelligent friend like Hume draw up in a few words an account of their author's true and contemptible character, he would have been loud in protestations that no such ignoble characteristics existed in his eloquent consciousness; and they might not have existed there, because his consciousness was a histrionic thing, and as imperfect an expression of his own nature as of man's. When the mind is irrational no practical purpose is served by stopping to understand it, because such a mind is irrelevant to practice, and the principles that guide the man's practice can be as well understood by eliminating his mind altogether. So a wise governor ignores his subjects' religion or concerns himself only with its economic and temperamental aspects; if the real forces that control life are understood, the symbols that represent those forces in the mind may be disregarded.

But such a government, like that of the British in India, is more practical than sympathetic. While wise men may endure it for the sake of their material interests, they will never love it for itself. There is nothing sweeter than to be sympathized with, while nothing requires a rarer intellectual heroism than willingness to see one's equation written out.

Nevertheless this same algebraic sense for character plays a large part in human friendship. A chief element in friendship is trust, and trust is not to be acquired by reproducing consciousness but only by penetrating to the constitutional instincts which, in determining action and habit, determine consciousness as well. Fidelity is not a property of ideas. It is a virtue possessed pre-eminently by nature, from the animals to the seasons and the stars. But fidelity gives friendship its deepest sanctity, and the respect we have for a man, for his force, ability, constancy, and dignity, is no sentiment evoked by his floating thoughts, but an assurance founded on our own observation that his conduct and character are to be counted upon. Smartness and vivacity, much emotion and many conceits, are obstacles both to fidelity and to merit. There is a high worth in rightly constituted natures independent of the play of mind. It consists in that ingrained virtue which under given circumstances would insure the noblest action, and with that action of course the noblest sentiments and ideas; ideas which would arise spontaneously and would make more account of their objects than of themselves.

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COMRADESHIP

When men are in the same boat together, when a common anxiety, occupation, or sport unites them, they feel their human kinship in an intensified form without any greater personal affinity subsisting between them. The same effect is produced by a common estrangement from the rest of society. For this reason comradeship lasts no

longer than the circumstances that bring it about. Its constancy is proportionate to the monotony of people's lives and minds. There is a lasting bond among schoolfellows, because no one can become a boy again and have a new set of playmates. There is a persistent comradeship with one's countrymen, especially abroad, because seldom is a man pliable and polyglot enough to be at home among foreigners, or really to understand them. There is an inevitable comradeship with men of the same breeding or profession, however bad these may be, because habits soon monopolize the man. Nevertheless a greater buoyancy, a longer youth, a richer experience, would break down all these limits of fellowship. Such clingings to the familiar are three parts dread of the unfamiliar and want of resource in its presence, for one part in them of genuine loyalty. Plasticity loves new moulds because it can fill them, but for a man of sluggish mind and bad manners there is decidedly no place like home.

Friends are generally of the same sex, for when men and women agree, it is only in their conclusions ; their reasons are always different. So that while intellectual harmony between men and women is easily possible, its delightful and magic quality lies precisely in the fact that it does not arise from mutual understanding, but is a conspiracy of alien essences and a kissing, as it were, in the dark. The human race, in its intellectual life, is organized like the bees : the masculine soul is a worker, sexually atrophied, and essentially dedicated to impersonal and universal arts ; the feminine is a queen, infinitely fertile, omnipresent in its brooding industry, but passive and abounding in intuitions without method and passions without justice. Friendship with a woman is therefore apt to be more or less than friendship : less, because there is no intellectual parity ; more, because (even when the relation remains wholly dispassionate, as in respect to old ladies) there is something mysterious and oracular about a woman's mind which inspires a certain instinctive deference and puts it out of the question to judge what she says by masculine standards. She has a kind of sibylline intuition and the right to be irrationally *à propos*. There is a gallantry of the mind which pervades all conversation

with a lady, as there is a natural courtesy towards children and mystics; but such a habit of respectful concession, marking as it does an intellectual alienation as profound, though not as complete, as that which separates us from the dumb animals, is radically incompatible with friendship.

22

LOVE

TRUE love, it used to be said, is love at first sight. Manners have much to do with such incidents, and the race which happens to set at a given time the fashion in literature makes its temperament public and exercises a sort of contagion over all men's fancies. If women are rarely seen and ordinarily not to be spoken to; if all imagination has to build upon is a furtive glance or casual motion, people fall in love at first sight. For they must fall in love somehow, and any stimulus is enough if none more powerful is forthcoming. When society, on the contrary, allows constant and easy intercourse between the sexes, a first impression, if not reinforced, will soon be hidden and obliterated by others. Acquaintance becomes necessary for love when it is necessary for memory. But what makes true love is not the information conveyed by acquaintance, not any circumstantial charms that may be therein discovered: it is still a deep and dumb instinctive affinity, an inexplicable emotion seizing the heart, an influence organizing the world, like a luminous crystal, about one magic point. So that although love seldom springs up suddenly in these days into anything like a full-blown passion, it is sight, it is presence, that makes in time a conquest over the heart; for all virtues, sympathies, confidences will fail to move a man to tenderness and to worship unless a poignant effluence from the object envelops him, so that he begins to walk, as it were, in a dream.

Not to believe in love is a great sign of dulness. There are some people so indirect and lumbering that they think all real affection must rest on circumstantial evidence. But a finely constituted being is sensitive to its deepest

affinities. This is precisely what refinement consists in, that we may feel in things immediate and infinitesimal a sure premonition of things ultimate and important. Fine senses vibrate at once to harmonies which it may take long to verify; so sight is finer than touch, and thought than sensation. Well-bred instinct meets reason half-way, and is prepared for the consonances that may follow. Beautiful things, when taste is formed, are obviously and unaccountably beautiful. The grounds we may bring ourselves to assign for our preferences are discovered by analysing those preferences, and articulate judgments follow upon emotions which they ought to express, but which they sometimes sophisticate. So too the reasons we give for love either express what it feels or else are insincere, attempting to justify at the bar of reason and convention something which is far more primitive than they and underlies them both.

True instinct can dispense with such excuses. It appeals to the event and is justified by the response which nature makes to it. It is of course far from infallible; it cannot dominate circumstances, and has no discursive knowledge; but it is presumably true, and what it foreknows is always essentially possible. Unrealizable it may indeed be in the jumbled context of this world, where the Fates, like an absent-minded printer, seldom allow a single line to stand perfect and unmarred.

The profoundest affinities are those most readily felt, and they remain a background and standard for all happiness. If we trace them out we succeed. If we put them by, although in other respects we may call ourselves happy, we inwardly know that we have dismissed the ideal, and all that was essentially possible has not been realized. Love in that case still owns a hidden and potential object, and we sanctify, perhaps, whatever kindnesses or partialities we indulge in by a secret loyalty to something impersonal and unseen. Such reserve, such religion, would not have been necessary had things responded to our first expectations. We might then have identified the ideal with the object that happened to call it forth. The life of reason might have been led instinctively, and we might have been guided by nature herself into the ways of peace.

As it is, circumstances, false steps, or the mere lapse of time, force us to shuffle our affections and take them as they come, or as we are suffered to indulge them. A mother is followed by a boyish friend, a friend by a girl, a girl by a wife, a wife by a child, a child by an idea. A divinity passes through these various temples; they may all remain standing, and we may continue our cult in them without outward change, long after the god has fled from the last into his native heaven. We may try to convince ourselves that we have lost nothing when we have lost all. We may take comfort in praising the mixed and perfunctory attachments which cling to us by force of habit and duty, repeating the empty names of creatures that have long ceased to be what we once could love, and assuring ourselves that we have remained constant, without admitting that the world, which is in irreparable flux, has from the first been betraying us.

Ashamed of being so deeply deceived, we may try to smile cynically at the glory that once shone upon us, and call it a dream. But cynicism is wasted on the ideal. There is indeed no idol ever identified with the ideal which honest experience, even without cynicism, will not some day unmask and discredit. Every real object must cease to be what it seemed, and none could ever be what the whole soul desired. Yet what the soul desires is nothing arbitrary. Life is no objectless dream. Everything that satisfies at all, even if partially and for an instant, justifies aspiration and rewards it. Existence, however, cannot be arrested; and only the transmissible forms of things can endure, to match the transmissible faculties which living beings hand down to one another. The ideal is accordingly significant, perpetual, and as constant as the nature it expresses; but it can never itself exist, nor can its particular embodiments endure.

Love is accordingly only half an illusion; the lover, but not his love, is deceived. His madness, as Plato taught, is divine; for though it be folly to identify the idol with the god, faith in the god is inwardly justified. That egregious idolatry may therefore be interpreted ideally and given a symbolic scope worthy of its natural causes and of the mystery it comes to celebrate. The

lover knows much more about absolute good and universal beauty than any logician or theologian, unless the latter, too, be lovers in disguise. Logical universals are terms in discourse, without vital ideality, while traditional gods are at best natural existences, more or less indifferent facts. What the lover comes upon, on the contrary, is truly persuasive, and witnesses to itself, so that he worships from the heart and beholds what he worships. That the true object is no natural being, but an ideal form essentially eternal and capable of endless embodiments, is far from abolishing its worth ; on the contrary, this fact makes love ideally relevant to generation, by which the human soul and body may be for ever renewed, and at the same time makes it a thing for large thoughts to be focussed upon, a thing representing all rational aims.

Whenever this ideality is absent and a lover sees nothing in his mistress but what every one else may find in her, loving her honestly in her unvarnished and accidental person, there is a friendly and humorous affection, admirable in itself, but no passion or bewitchment of love ; she is a member of his group, not a spirit in his pantheon. Such an affection may be altogether what it should be ; it may bring a happiness all the more stable because the heart is quite whole, and no divine shaft has pierced it. It is hard to staunch wounds inflicted by a god. The glance of an ideal love is terrible and glorious, foreboding death and immortality together. Love could not be called divine without platitude if it regarded nothing but its nominal object ; to be divine it must not envisage an accidental good but the principle of goodness, that which gives other goods their ultimate meaning.

Love is a true natural religion ; it has a visible cult, it is kindled by natural beauties and bows to the best symbol it may find for its hope ; it sanctifies a natural mystery ; and, finally, when understood, it recognizes that what it worshipped under a figure was truly the principle of all good.

The loftiest edifices need the deepest foundations. Love would never take so high a flight unless it sprung from something profound and elementary. It is accordingly most truly love when it is irresistible and fatal. The

substance of all passion, if we could gather it together, would be the basis of all ideals, to which all goods would have to refer. Lovers are vividly aware of this fact : their ideal, apparently so inarticulate, seems to them to include everything. It shares the mystical quality of all primitive life. Sophisticated people can hardly understand how vague experience is at bottom, and how truly that vagueness supports whatever clearness is afterward attained. They cling to the notion that nothing can have a spiritual scope that does not spring from reflection. But in that case life itself, which brings reflection about, would never support spiritual interests, and all that is moral would be unnatural and consequently self-destructive. In truth, all spiritual interests are supported by animal life ; in this the generative function is fundamental ; and it is therefore no paradox, but something altogether fitting, that if that function realized all it comprises, nothing human would remain outside. Such an ultimate fulfilment would differ of course from a first satisfaction, just as all that reproduction reproduces differs from the reproductive function itself, and vastly exceeds it. All organs and activities which are inherited, in a sense grow out of the reproductive process and serve to clothe it ; so that when the generative energy is awakened all that can ever be is virtually called up and, so to speak, made consciously potential ; and love yearns for the universe of values.

This secret is gradually revealed to those who are inwardly attentive and allow love to teach them something. A man who has truly loved, though he may come to recognize the thousand incidental illusions into which love may have led him, will not recant its essential faith. He will keep his sense for the ideal and his power to worship. As a harp, made to vibrate to the fingers, gives some music to every wind, so the nature of man, necessarily susceptible to woman, becomes simultaneously sensitive to other influences, and capable of tenderness toward every object. A philosopher, a soldier, and a courtesan will express the same religion in different ways. In fortunate cases love may glide imperceptibly into settled domestic affections, giving them henceforth a touch of ideality ; for when love dies in the odour of sanctity people venerate

his relics. In other cases allegiance to the ideal may appear more sullenly, breaking out in whims, or in little sentimental practices which might seem half-conventional. Again, it may inspire a religious conversion, charitable works, or even artistic labours. Nature also is often a second mistress that consoles us for the loss of a first.

In all these ways people attempt more or less seriously to lead the life of reason, expressing outwardly allegiance to whatever in their minds has come to stand for the ideal. The machinery which serves reproduction thus finds kindred but higher uses, as every organ does in a liberal life ; and what Plato called a desire for birth in beauty may be sublimated even more, until it yearns for an ideal immortality in a transfigured world, a world made worthy of that love which its children have so often lavished on it in their dreams.

PART II

LITTLE ESSAYS ON RELIGION

23

IMAGINATIVE NATURE OF RELIGION

EXPERIENCE has repeatedly confirmed that well-known maxim of Bacon's, that "a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." In every age the most comprehensive thinkers have found in the religion of their time and country something they could accept, interpreting and illustrating that religion so as to give it depth and universal application. Even the heretics and atheists, if they have had profundity, turn out after a while to be forerunners of some new orthodoxy. What they rebel against is a religion alien to their nature; they are atheists only by accident, and relatively to a convention which inwardly offends them, but they yearn mightily in their own souls after the religious acceptance of a world interpreted in their own fashion. So it appears in the end that their atheism and loud protestation were in fact the hastier part of their thought, since what emboldened them to deny the poor world's faith was that they were too impatient to understand it. Indeed, the enlightenment common to young wits and worm-eaten old satirists, who plume themselves on detecting the scientific ineptitude of religion —something which the blindest half see—is not nearly enlightened enough: it points to notorious facts incompatible with religious tenets literally taken, but it leaves unexplored the habits of thought from which those tenets sprang, their original meaning, and their true function. Such studies would bring the sceptic face to face with the mystery and pathos of mortal existence. They would make him understand why religion is so profoundly moving and in a sense so profoundly just. There must needs be

something humane and necessary in an influence that has become the most general sanction of virtue, the chief occasion for art and philosophy, and the source, perhaps, of the best human happiness. If nothing, as Hooker said, is "so malapert as a splenetic religion," a sour irreligion is almost as perverse.

At the same time, when Bacon penned the sage epigram we have quoted he forgot to add that the God to whom depth in philosophy brings back men's minds is far from being the same from whom a little philosophy estranges them. It would be pitiful indeed if mature reflection bred no better conceptions than those which have drifted down the muddy stream of time, where tradition and passion have jumbled everything together. Traditional conceptions, when they are felicitous, may be adopted by the poet, but they must be purified by the moralist and disintegrated by the philosopher. Each religion, so dear to those whose life it sanctifies, and fulfilling so necessary a function in the society that has adopted it, necessarily contradicts every other religion, and probably contradicts itself. The sciences are necessarily allies, but religions, like languages, are necessarily rivals. What religion a man shall have is a historical accident, quite as much as what language he shall speak. In the rare circumstances where a choice is possible, he may, with some difficulty, make an exchange; but even then he is only adopting a new convention which may be more agreeable to his personal temper but which is essentially as arbitrary as the old.

The attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular. A courier's or a dragoman's speech may indeed be often unusual and drawn from disparate sources, not without some mixture of personal originality; but that private jargon will have a meaning only because of its analogy to one or more conventional languages and its obvious derivation from them. So travellers from one religion to another, people who have lost their spiritual nationality, may often retain a neutral and confused residuum of belief, which they may egregiously regard as the essence of all religion, so little

may they remember the graciousness and naturalness of that ancestral accent which a perfect religion should have. Yet a moment's probing of the conceptions surviving in such minds will show them to be nothing but vestiges of old beliefs, creases which thought, even if emptied of all dogmatic tenets, has not been able to smooth away at its first unfolding. Later generations, if they have any religion at all, will be found either to revert to ancient authority, or to attach themselves spontaneously to something wholly novel and immensely positive, to some faith promulgated by a fresh genius and passionately embraced by a converted people. Thus every living and healthy religion has a marked idiosyncrasy. Its power consists in its special and surprising message and in the bias which that revelation gives to life. The vistas it opens and the mysteries it propounds are another world to live in; and another world to live in—whether we expect ever to pass wholly into it or no—is what we mean by having a religion.

Whoever it was that searched the heavens with his telescope and could find no God, would not have found the human mind if he had searched the brain with a microscope. Yet God existed in man's apprehension long before mathematics or even, perhaps, before the vault of heaven; for the objectification of the whole mind, with its passions and motives, naturally precedes that abstraction by which the idea of a material world is drawn from the chaos of experience, an abstraction which culminates in such atomic and astronomical theories as science is now familiar with. The sense for life in things, be they small or great, is not derived from the abstract idea of their bodies but is an ancient concomitant to that idea, inseparable from it until it became abstract. The failure to find God among the stars, or even the attempt to find him there, does not indicate that human experience affords no avenue to the idea of God—for history proves the contrary—but indicates rather the atrophy in this particular man of the imaginative faculty by which his race had attained to that idea. Such an atrophy might indeed become general, and God would in that case disappear from human experience as music would disappear if universal deafness attacked the race. Such an event is made conceivable

by the loss of allied imaginative habits, which is observable in historic times. Yet possible variations in human faculty do not involve the illegitimacy of such faculties as actually subsist; and the abstract world known to science, unless it dries up the ancient fountains of poetry by its habitual presence in thought, does not remove those parallel dramatizations or abstractions which experience may have suggested to men. In fact people seldom take a myth in the same sense in which they would take an empirical truth. All the doctrines that have flourished in the world about immortality have hardly affected men's natural sentiment in the face of death, a sentiment which those doctrines, if taken seriously, ought wholly to reverse. Men almost universally have acknowledged a Providence, but that fact has had no force to destroy natural aversions and fears in the presence of events; and yet, if Providence had ever been really trusted, those preferences would all have lapsed, being seen to be blind, rebellious, and blasphemous. Prayer, among sane people, has never superseded practical efforts to secure the desired end; a proof that the sphere of expression was never really confused with that of reality. Indeed, such a confusion, if it had passed from theory to practice, would have changed mythology into madness. With rare exceptions this declension has not occurred and myths have been taken with a grain of salt which not only made them digestible, but heightened their savour.

It is customary to judge religions and philosophies by their truth, which is seldom their strong point; yet the application of that unsympathetic criterion is not unjust, since they aspire to be true, maintain that they are so, and forbid any opposed view, no matter how obvious and inevitable, to be called true in their stead. But belief, which we have come to associate with religion, belongs really to science; myths are not believed in, they are conceived and understood. To demand belief for an idea is already to contrast interpretation with knowledge; it is to assert that that idea has scientific truth. Allegories, however, have their virtue; and when religions and philosophies are dead, or when we are so removed from them by time or training that the question of their truth is not a

living question for us, they do not on that account lose all their interest ; then, in fact, for the first time they manifest their virtues to the unbeliever. He sees that they are expressions of human genius ; that however false to their subject-matter they may be, like the conventions of art they are true to the eye and to the spirit that fashioned them. And as nothing in the world, not even the truth, is so interesting as human genius, these incredible or obsolete religions and philosophies become delightful to us. The sting is gone out of their errors, which no longer threaten to delude us, and they have acquired a beauty invisible to the eye of their authors, because of the very refraction which the truth suffered in that vital medium. We see that they are a kind of poetry in which people half believed, because it intervened in their lives ; a poetry that beautified and justified to their minds the unfathomed facts of their ancestral worship, their social bonds, and their personal conscience.

24

PROSAIC MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Religious doctrines would do well to withdraw their pretension to be dealing with matters of fact. That pretension is not only the source of the conflicts of religion with science and of the vain and bitter controversies of sects ; it is also the cause of the impurity and incoherence of religion in the soul, when it seeks its sanctions in the sphere of existence, and forgets that its proper concern is to express the ideal. For the dignity of religion, like that of poetry, lies precisely in its ideal adequacy, in its fit rendering of the meanings and values of life, in its anticipation of perfection ; so that the excellence of religion is due to an idealization of experience which, while making religion noble if treated as poetry, makes it necessarily false if treated as science. Its function is rather to draw from reality materials for an image of that ideal to which reality ought to conform, and to make us citizens, by anticipation, in the world we crave.

The mass of mankind is divided into two classes—the

Sancho Panzas who have a sense for reality, but no ideals, and the Don Quixotes with a sense for ideals, but mad. The expedient of recognizing facts as facts and accepting ideals as ideals, although apparently simple enough, seems to elude the normal human power of discrimination.

The liberal school that attempts to fortify religion by minimizing its expression, both theoretic and devotional, seems to be merely impoverishing religious symbols and vulgarizing religious aims; it subtracts from faith that imagination by which faith becomes an interpretation and idealization of human life, and retains only a stark and superfluous principle of superstition. For meagre and abstract as such a religion may be, it contains all the venom of absolute pretensions; it is no less cursed than the more developed systems with a controversial unrest and with a consequent undertone of constraint and suspicion. It tortures itself with the same circular proofs in its mistaken ambition to enter the plane of vulgar reality and escape its native element of ideas. It casts a greater blight than would a civilized orthodoxy on any joyous freedom of thought. For the respect exacted by an establishment is limited and external, and not greater than its traditional forms probably deserve, as normal expressions of human feeling and apt symbols of moral truth. A reasonable deference once shown to authority, the mind remains, under such an establishment, inwardly and happily free; the conscience is not intimidated, the imagination is not tied up. But the preoccupations of a hungry and abstract fanaticism poison the liberty nominally allowed, bias all vision, and turn philosophy itself, which should be the purest of delights and consolations, into an obsession and a burden to the soul. In such a spectral form religious illusion does not cease to be illusion. Mythology cannot become science by being reduced in bulk, but it may cease, as a mythology, to be worth having.

On the other hand, the positivistic school of criticism would seem to have overlooked the highest function of human nature. The environing world can justify itself to the mind only by the free life which it fosters there. All observation is observation of brute fact, all discipline is mere repression, until these facts digested and this

discipline embodied in humane impulses become the starting-point for a creative movement of the imagination, the firm basis for ideal constructions in society, religion, and art. Only as conditions of these human activities can the facts of nature and history become morally intelligible or practically important. In themselves they are trivial incidents, gossip of the Fates, cacklings of their inexhaustible garrulity. To regard the function of man as accomplished when these chance happenings have been recorded by him or contributed to by his impulsive action, is to ignore his reason, his privilege—shared for the rest with every living creature—of using nature as food and substance for his own life. This human life is not merely animal and passionate. The best and keenest part of it consists in that very gift of creation and government which, together with all the transcendental functions of his own mind, man has significantly attributed to God as to his highest ideal. Not to see in this activity the purpose and standard of all life is to have left human nature half unread. It is to look to the removal of certain incidental obstacles in the work of reason as to the solution of its positive tasks. In comparison with such apathetic naturalism, all the errors and follies of religion are worthy of indulgent sympathy, since they represent an effort, however misguided, to interpret and to use the materials of experience for moral ends, and to measure the value of reality by its relation to the ideal.

25

THE HASTE TO BELIEVE

Religions and philosophies may be capable of assimilating a great amount of wisdom even if their first foundation is folly. When the mind, for want of a better vocabulary, is reduced to using symbols, it pours into them a part of its own life and makes them beautiful. Their loss is a real blow, while the incapacity that called for them endures; and the soul seems to be crippled by losing its crutches. For this reason religions do not disappear when they are discredited; it is requisite that they should be replaced.

For a thousand years the augurs may have laughed; they were bound nevertheless to stand at their posts until the monks came to relieve them.

The attempt to subsume the natural order under the moral is like attempts to establish a government of the parent by a child—something children are not averse to. But such follies are the follies of an intelligent and eager creature, restless in a world it cannot at once master and comprehend. They are not due to lack of intelligence or of faith in law, but rather to a premature vivacity in catching at laws, a vivacity misled by inadequate information. The hunger for facile wisdom is the root of these errors. Men become superstitious, not because they have too much imagination, but because they are not aware that they have any; and even the best philosophers seldom perceive the poetic merit of their systems.

26

PATHETIC NOTIONS OF GOD

It is pathetic to observe how lowly the motives are that religion, even the highest, attributes to the deity, and from what a hard-pressed and bitter existence they have been drawn. To be given the best morsel, to be remembered, to be praised, to be obeyed blindly and punctiliously—these have been thought points of honour with the gods, for which they would dispense favours and punishments on the most exorbitant scale. Nor are the metaphysicians always happier in their theology. They call God universal substance and cause; but the primary substance of things is their mere material, their first cause is their lowest instrument. Nothing can be lower or more wholly instrumental than the substance and cause of all things.

Sometimes, indeed, it is from the good, from the experience of beauty and happiness, from the occasional harmony between our nature and our environment, that we draw our conception of the divine life. Yet even then we succumb to human illusions. We believe those things to be happy, for instance, which it makes us happy to think of or to see: the belief in the felicity of the supreme being

has no other foundation. Our joy in the thought of omnipotence, omniscience, and changelessness causes us to attribute a joy to the possession of them, which they would in fact, perhaps, be very far from involving or even allowing.

No religion has ever given a picture of deity which men could have imitated without the grossest immorality. Yet these shocking representations have not had a bad effect on believers. The deity was opposed to their own vices; those it might itself be credited with offered no contagious example. In spite of the theologians, we know by instinct that in speaking of the gods we are dealing in myths and symbols. Some aspect of nature or some law of life, expressed in an attribute of deity, is what we really regard, and to regard such things, however sinister they may be, cannot but chasten and moralize us. The personal character that such a function would involve, if it were exercised willingly by a responsible being, is something that never enters our thoughts. No such painful image comes to perplex the plain sense of instinctive, poetic religion. Homer's stories about the gods can hardly have demoralized the youths who recited them. To give moral importance to myths, as Plato tended to do, is to take them far too seriously and to belittle what they stand for. Left to themselves they float in an ineffectual stratum of the brain. They are understood and grow current precisely by not being pressed, like an idiom or a metaphor.

The gods sometimes appear, and when they do they bring us a foretaste of that sublime victory of mind over matter which we may never gain in experience but which may constantly be gained in thought. When natural phenomena are conceived as the manifestation of divine life, human life itself, by sympathy with that ideal projection of itself, enlarges its customary bounds, until it seems capable of becoming the life of the universe. A god is a conceived victory of mind over nature. A visible god is the consciousness of such a victory momentarily attained. The vision soon vanishes, the sense of omnipotence is soon dispelled by recurring conflicts with hostile forces; but the momentary illusion of that realized good has left us with the perennial knowledge of good as an ideal. Therein lies the essence and the function of religion.

27

GREEK RELIGION

In Greek religion, as in all other religions, there was a background of vulgar superstition. Survivals and revivals of totem-worship, taboo, magic, ritual barter, and objectified rhetoric are to be found in it to the very end; yet if we consider in Greek religion its characteristic tendency, and what rendered it distinctively Greek, we see that it was its unprecedented ideality, disinterestedness, and æstheticism. The pagan world, because its maturity was simpler than our crudeness, seems childish to us. We do not find there our sins and holiness, our love, charity, and honour. To the Greek, in so far as he was a Greek, religion was an aspiration to grow like the gods by invoking their companionship, rehearsing their story, feeling vicariously the glow of their splendid prerogatives, and placing them, in the form of beautiful and very human statues, constantly before his eyes. This sympathetic interest in the immortals took the place, in the typical Greek mind, of any vivid hope of human immortality; perhaps it made such a hope seem superfluous and inappropriate. Mortality belonged to man, as immortality to the gods; and the one was the complement of the other. Imagine a poet who to the freedom and simplicity of Homer should have added the more reverent idealism of a later age; and what an inexhaustible fund of poetry might he not have found in this conception of the immortals leading a human life, without its sordid contrarieties and limitations, eternally young, and frank, and different!

28

ORIGINAL CHRISTIAN FAITH

The pagan poets, when they devised a myth, half believed in it for a fact. What really lent some truth—moral truth only—to their imaginations was the beauty of nature,

the comedy of life, or the groans of mankind, crushed between the upper and the nether millstones; but being scientifically ignorant they allowed their pictorial wisdom to pass for a revealed science, for a physics of the unseen. If even among the pagans the poetic expression of human experience could be mistaken in this way for knowledge of occult existences, how much more must this have been the case among a more ignorant and a more intense nation like the Jews? Indeed, *events* are what the Jews have always remembered and hoped for; if their religion was not a guide to events, an assured means towards a positive and experimental salvation, it was nothing. Their theology was meagre in the description of the Lord's nature, but rich in the description of his ways. Indeed, their belief in the existence and power of the Lord, if we take it pragmatically and not imaginatively, was simply the belief in certain moral harmonies in destiny, in the sufficiency of conduct of a certain sort to secure success and good fortune, both national and personal. This faith was partly an experience and partly a demand; it turned on history and prophecy. History was interpreted by a prophetic insight into the moral principle, believed to govern it; and prophecy was a passionate demonstration of the same principles, at work in the catastrophes of the day or of the morrow.

The after-effects of Hebraism, however, were contrary to its foundations; for the Jews loved the world so much that they brought themselves, in order to win and enjoy it, to an intense concentration of purpose; but this effort and discipline not only failed of their object, but grew far too absolute and sublime to think their object could ever have been earthly; and the supernatural machinery which was to have secured prosperity, while that still enticed, now had to furnish some worthier object for the passion it had artificially fostered. Fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim.

Christianity, being a practical and living faith in a possible eventual redemption from sin, from the punishment for sin, from the thousand circumstances that make the most brilliant worldly life a sham and a failure, essentially involves a faith in a supernatural physics, in such an

economy of forces, behind, within, and around the discoverable forces of nature, that the destiny which nature seems to prepare for us may be reversed, that failures may be turned into successes, ignominy into glory, and humble faith into triumphant vision: and this not merely by a change in our point of view or estimation of things, but by an actual historical, physical transformation in the things themselves. To believe this in our day may require courage, even a certain childish simplicity; but were not courage and a certain childish simplicity always requisite for Christian faith? It never was a religion for the rationalist and the worldling; it was based on alienation from the world, from the intellectual world no less than from the economic and political. It flourished in the Oriental imagination that is able to treat all existence with disdain and to hold it superbly at arm's length, and at the same time is subject to visions and false memories, is swayed by the eloquence of private passion, and raises confidently to heaven the cry of the poor, the bereaved, and the distressed. Its daily bread, from the beginning, was hope for a miraculous change of scene, for prison walls falling to the ground about it, for a heart inwardly comforted, and a shower of good things from the sky.

It is clear that a supernaturalistic faith of this sort, which might wholly inspire some revolutionary sect, can never wholly inspire human society. Whenever a nation is converted to Christianity, its Christianity, in practice, must be largely converted into paganism. The true Christian is in all countries a pilgrim and a stranger; not his kinsmen, but whoever does the will of his Father who is in heaven, is his brother and sister and mother and his real compatriot. In a nation that calls itself Christian every child may be pledged, at baptism, to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; but the flesh will assert itself notwithstanding, the devil will have his due, and the nominal Christian, become a man of business and the head of a family, will form an integral part of that very world which he will pledge his children to renounce in turn as he holds them over the font. The lips, even the intellect, may continue to profess the Christian ideal; but public and social life will be guided by quite another.

The ages of faith, the ages of Christian unity, were such only superficially. When all men are Christians only a small element can be Christian in the average man. The thirteenth century, for instance, is supposed to be the golden age of Catholicism ; but what seems to have filled it, if we may judge by the witness of Dante ? Little but bitter conflicts, racial and religious ; faithless rebellions, both in states and in individuals, against the Christian regimen : worldliness in the church, barbarism in the people, and a dawning of all sorts of scientific and æsthetic passions, in themselves quite pagan and contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Christendom at that time was by no means a kingdom of God on earth ; it was a conglomeration of incorrigible rascals, intellectually more or less Christian. We may see the same thing under different circumstances in the Spain of Philip II. Here was a government consciously labouring, in the service of the church, to resist Turks, convert pagans, banish Moslems, and crush Protestants. Yet the very forces engaged in defending the church (the army and the Inquisition) were alien to the Christian life ; they were fit embodiments rather of chivalry and greed, or of policy and jealous dominion. The ecclesiastical forces also—theology, ritual, and hierarchy—employed in spreading the gospel, were themselves alien to the gospel. An anti-worldly religion finds itself in fact in this dilemma : if it remains merely spiritual, developing no material organs, it cannot affect the world ; while if it develops organs with which to operate on the world, these organs become a part of the world from which it is trying to wean the individual spirit, so that the moment it is armed for conflict such a religion has two enemies on its hands. It is stifled by its necessary armour, and adds treason in its members to hostility in its foes. The passions and arts it uses against its opponents are as fatal to itself as those which its opponents array against it.

In every age in which a supernaturalistic system is preached we must accordingly expect to find the world standing up stubbornly against it, essentially unconverted and hostile, whatever name it may have been christened with ; and we may expect the spirit of the world to find expression, not only in overt opposition to the super-

naturalistic system, but also in the surviving or supervening worldliness of the faithful. Such an insidious revulsion of the natural man against a religion he does not openly discard is what, in modern Christendom, we call the Renaissance. No less than the Revolution (which is the later open rebellion against the same traditions) the Renaissance is radically inimical to Christianity. To say that Christianity survives, even if weakened or disestablished, is to say that the Renaissance and the Revolution are still incomplete. Far from being past events they are living programmes. The ideal of the Renaissance is to restore pagan standards in polite learning, in philosophy, in sentiment, and in morals. It is to abandon and exactly reverse one's baptismal vows. Instead of forsaking this wicked world, the men of the Renaissance accept, love, and cultivate the world, with all its pomp and vanities; they believe in the blamelessness of natural life and in its perfectibility; or they cling at least to a noble ambition to perfect it and a glorious ability to enjoy it. Instead of renouncing the flesh, they feed, refine, and adorn it; their arts glorify its beauty and its passions. And far from renouncing the devil—if we understand by the devil the proud assertion on the part of the finite of its autonomy: autonomy of the intellect in science, autonomy of the heart and will in morals—the men of the Renaissance are possessed by the devil altogether. They worship nothing and acknowledge authority in nothing save in their own spirit. No opposition could be more radical and complete than that between the Renaissance and the anti-worldly religion of the gospel.

29

THE CONVERT

WHAT overcame the world, because it was what the world desired, was not a moral reform—for that was preached by every sect; not an ascetic regimen—for that was practised by heathen gymnosophists and pagan philosophers; not brotherly love within the church—for

the Jews had and have that at least in equal measure; but what overcame the world was what Saint Paul said he would always preach: Christ and him crucified. Therein was a new poetry, a new ideal, a new God. Therein was the transcript of the real experience of humanity, as men found it in their inmost souls and as they were dimly aware of it in universal history. The moving power was a fable—for who stopped to question whether its elements were historical, if only its meaning were profound and its inspiration contagious? This fable had points of attachment to real life in a visible brotherhood and in an extant worship, as well as in the religious past of a whole people. At the same time it carried the imagination into a new sphere; it sanctified the poverty and sorrow at which paganism had shuddered; it awakened tenderer emotions, revealed more humane objects of adoration, and furnished subtler instruments of grace. It was a whole world of poetry descended among men, like the angels at the Nativity, doubling, as it were, their habitation, so that they might move through supernatural realms in the spirit while they walked the earth in the flesh. The consciousness of new loves, new duties, fresh consolations, and luminous, unutterable hopes accompanied them wherever they went. They stopped willingly in the midst of their business for recollection, like men in love; they sought to stimulate their imaginations, to focus, as it were, the long vistas of an invisible landscape.

A crude and superficial theology may confuse God with the thunder, the mountains, the heavenly bodies, or the whole universe; but when we pass from these easy identifications to a religion that has taken root in the hearts of men, we find its objects and its dogmas purely ideal, transparent expressions of moral experience and perfect counterparts of human needs. The evidence of history or of the senses is left far behind and never thought of; the evidence of the heart, the value of the idea, are alone regarded.

Religion, then, offers another world, almost as vast and solid as the real one, in which the soul may develop. In entering it we do not enter a sphere of arbitrary dreams, but a sphere of law where learning, experience, and happi-

ness may be gained. There is more method, more reason, in such madness than in the sanity of most people. Hence the believer in any adequate and mature religion clings to it with such strange tenacity and regards it as his highest heritage, while the outsider, whose imagination speaks another language, or is dumb altogether, wonders how so wild a fiction can take root in a reasonable mind.

30

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE A MORAL ALLEGORY

THE great characteristic of Christianity, inherited from Judaism, was that its scheme was historical. Not existences but events were the subject of its primary interest. It presented a story, not a cosmology. It was an epic in which there was, of course, superhuman machinery but of which the subject was man, and, notable circumstance, the Hero was a man as well. Like Buddhism, it gave the highest honour to a man who could lead his fellow-men to perfection. What had previously been the divine reality—the engine of nature—now became a temporary stage, built for the exigencies of a human drama. What had been before a detail of the edifice—the life of man—now became the argument and purpose of the whole creation. Notable transformation, on which the philosopher cannot meditate too much.

Was Christianity right in saying that the world was made for man? Was the account it adopted of the method and causes of creation conceivably correct? Was the garden of Eden a historical reality, and were the Hebrew prophecies announcements of the advent of Jesus Christ? Did the deluge come because of man's wickedness, and will the last day coincide with the dramatic *dénoument* of church history? In other words, is the spiritual experience of man the explanation of the universe? Certainly not, if we are thinking of a scientific, not of a poetical explanation. As a matter of fact, man is a product of laws which must also destroy him, and which, as Spinoza would say, infinitely exceed him in their scope and power.

His welfare is indifferent to the stars, but dependent on them. And yet that counter-Copernican revolution accomplished by Christianity—a revolution which Kant should hardly have attributed to himself—which put man in the centre of the universe and made the stars circle about him, must have some kind of justification. And indeed its justification (if we may be so brief on so great a subject) is that what is false in the science of facts may be true in the science of values. While the existence of things must be understood by referring them to their causes, which are mechanical, their functions can only be explained by what is interesting in their results; in other words, by their relation to human nature and to human happiness.

The Christian drama was a magnificent poetic rendering of this side of the matter, a side which Socrates had envisaged by his admirable method, but which now flooded the consciousness of mankind with torrential emotions. Christianity was born under an eclipse, when the light of nature was obscured; but the orb that intercepted that light was itself luminous, and shed on succeeding ages a moonlike radiance, paler and sadder than the other, but no less divine, and meriting no less to be eternal. Man now studied his own destiny, as he had before studied the sky, and the woods, and the sunny depths of water; and as the earlier study produced in his soul—*anima naturaliter poeta*—the images of Zeus, Pan, and Nereus, so the later study produced the images of Jesus and of Mary, of heaven and hell, of miracles and sacraments. The observation was no less exact, the translation into poetic images no less wonderful here than there. To trace the endless transfiguration, with all its unconscious ingenuity and harmony, might be the theme of a fascinating science. Let not the reader fancy that in Christianity everything was settled by records and traditions. The idea of Christ himself had to be constructed by the imagination in response to moral demands, tradition giving only the barest external points of attachment. The facts were nothing until they became symbols; and nothing could turn them into symbols except an eager imagination on the watch for all that might embody its dreams.

The crucifixion, for example, would remain a tragic incident without further significance if we regard it merely as a historical fact; to make it a religious mystery, an idea capable of converting the world, the moral imagination must transform it into something that happens for the sake of the soul, so that each believer may say to himself that Christ so suffered for the love of him. And such a thought is surely the objectification of an inner impulse; the idea of Christ becomes something spiritual, something poetical. What literal meaning could there be in saying that one man or one God died for the sake of each and every other individual? By what effective causal principle could their salvation be thought to necessitate his death, or his death to make possible their salvation? By an ὕστερον πρότερον natural to the imagination; for in truth the matter is reversed. Christ's death is a symbol of human life. Men could "believe in" his death, because it was a figure and premonition of the burden of their experience. That is why, when some Apostle told them the story, they could say to him: "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet: thou hast told me all things whatsoever I have felt." Thus the central fact of all Christ's history, narrated by every Evangelist, could still be nothing but a painful incident, as unessential to the Christian religion as the death of Socrates to the Socratic philosophy, were it not transformed by the imagination of the believer into the counterpart of his own moral need. Then, by ceasing to be viewed merely as a historical fact, the death of Christ becomes a religious inspiration. The whole of Christian doctrine is thus religious and efficacious only when it becomes poetry.

Take, as another example, the doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments. Many perplexed Christians of our day try to reconcile this spirited fable with their modern horror of physical suffering and their detestation of cruelty; and it must be admitted that the image of men suffering unending tortures in retribution for a few ignorant and sufficiently wretched sins is, even as poetry, somewhat repellent. The idea of torments and vengeance is happily becoming alien to our society, and is therefore not a natural vehicle for our religion. Some accordingly reject altogether

the Christian doctrine on this point, which is too strong for their nerves. Their objection, of course, is not simply that there is no evidence of its truth. If they asked for evidence, would they believe anything? Proofs are the last thing looked for by a truly religious mind which feels the imaginative fitness of its faith and knows instinctively that, in such a matter, imaginative fitness is all that can be required. The reason men reject the doctrine of eternal punishment is that they find it distasteful or unmeaning. They show, by the nature of their objections, that they acknowledge poetic propriety or moral truth to be the sole criterion of credibility in religion.

But, passing over the change of sentiment which gives rise to this change of doctrine, let us inquire of what reality Christian eschatology was the imaginative rendering. What was it in the actual life of men that made them think of themselves as hanging between eternal bliss and eternal perdition? Was it not the diversity, the momentousness, and the finality of their experience here? No doubt the desire to make the reversal of the injustices of this world as melodramatic and picturesque as possible contributed to the adoption of this idea; the ideal values of life were thus contrasted with its apparent values in the most absolute and graphic manner. But we may say that beneath this motive, based on the exigences of exposition and edification, there was a deeper intuition. There was the genuine moralist's sympathy with a philosophic and logical view of immortality rather than with a superstitious and sentimental one. Another life exists and is infinitely more important than this life; but it is reached by the intuition of ideals, not by the multiplication of phenomena; it is an eternal state not an indefinite succession of changes. Transitory life ends for the Christian when the balance-sheet of his individual merits and demerits is made up, and the eternity that ensues is the eternal reality of those values.

For the Oriental, who believed in transmigration, the individual dissolved into an infinity of phases; he went on actually and perpetually, as nature does; his immortality was a long purgatory behind which a shadowy hell and heaven scarcely appeared in the form of annihilation or

absorption. This happened because the oriental mind has no middle; it oscillates between extremes and passes directly from sense to mysticism, and back again; it lacks virile understanding and intelligence creative of form. But Christianity, following in this the Socratic philosophy, rose to the conception of eternal essences, forms suspended above the flux of natural things and expressing the ideal suggestions and rational goals of experience. Each man, for Christianity, has an immortal soul; each life has the potentiality of an eternal meaning, and as this potentiality is or is not actualized, as this meaning is or is not expressed in the phenomena of this life, the soul is eternally saved or lost. As the tree falleth, so it lieth. The finality of this brief and personal experiment, the consequent awful solemnity of the hour of death when all trial is over and when the eternal sentence is passed, has always been duly felt by the Christian. The church, indeed, in answer to the demand for a more refined and discriminating presentation of its dogma, introduced the temporary discipline of purgatory, in which the virtues already stamped on the soul might be brought to greater clearness and rid of the alloy of imperfection; but this purification allowed no essential development, no change of character or fate; the soul in purgatory was already saved, already holy.

The harshness of the doctrine of eternal judgment is therefore a consequence of its symbolic truth. The church might have been less absolute in the matter had she yielded more, as she did in the doctrine of purgatory, to the desire for merely imaginary extensions of human experience. But her better instincts kept her, after all, to the moral interpretation of reality; and the facts to be rendered were uncompromising enough. Art is long, life brief. To have told men they would have infinite opportunities to reform and to advance would have been to feed them on gratuitous fictions without raising them, as it was the function of Christianity to do, to a consciousness of the spiritual meaning and upshot of existence. To have speculated about the infinite extent of experience and its endless transformations, after the manner of the barbarous religions, and never to have conceived its moral essence, would have been to encourage a dream which may by chance be

prophetic, but which is as devoid of ideal meaning as of empirical probability. Christian fictions were at least significant; they beguiled the intellect, no doubt, and were mistaken for accounts of external fact; but they enlightened the imagination; they made man understand, as never before or since, the pathos and nobility of his life, the necessity of discipline, the possibility of sanctity. The divine was reached by the idealization of the human. The supernatural was an allegory of the natural, and rendered the values of transitory things under the image of eternal existences.

31

THE CHRISTIAN EPIC

When the Jewish notion of creation and divine government of the world presented itself to the Greeks, they hastened to assimilate it to their familiar notions of imitation, expression, finality, and significance. And when the Christians spoke of Christ as the Son of God, who now sat at his right hand in the heavens, their Platonic disciples immediately thought of the Nous or Logos, the divine Intelligence, incarnate as they had always believed in the whole world, and yet truly the substance and essence of divinity. To say that this incarnation had taken place pre-eminently, or even exclusively, in Christ was not an impossible concession to make to pious enthusiasm, at least if the philosophy involved in the old conception could be retained and embodied in the new orthodoxy. Sacred history could thus be interpreted as a temporal execution of eternal decrees, and the plan of salvation as an ideal necessity. Cosmic scope and metaphysical meaning were given to Hebrew tenets, so unspeculative in their original intention, and it became possible even for a Platonic philosopher to declare himself a Christian.

The eclectic Christian philosophy thus engendered constitutes one of the most complete, elaborate, and impressive products of the human mind. The ruins of more than one civilization and of more than one philosophy were ransacked to furnish materials for this heavenly

Byzantium. It was a myth circumstantial and sober enough in tone to pass for an account of facts, and yet loaded with enough miracle, poetry, and submerged wisdom to take the place of a moral philosophy and present what seemed at the time an adequate ideal to the heart. Many a mortal, in all subsequent ages, perplexed and abandoned in this ungovernable world, has set sail resolutely for that enchanted island and found there a semblance of happiness, its narrow limits give so much room for the soul and its penitential soil breeds so many consolations. True, the brief time and narrow argument into which Christian imagination squeezes the world must seem to a speculative pantheist childish and poor, involving, as it does, a fatuous perversion of nature and history and a ridiculous emphasis laid on local events and partial interests. Yet just this violent reduction of things to a human stature, this half-innocent, half-arrogant assumption that what is important for a man must control the whole universe, is what made Christian philosophy originally appealing and what still arouses, in certain quarters, enthusiastic belief in its beneficence and finality.

Nor should we wonder at this enduring illusion. Man is still in his childhood; for he cannot respect an ideal which is not imposed on him against his will, nor can he find satisfaction in a good created by his own action. He is afraid of a universe that leaves him alone. Freedom appals him; he can apprehend in it nothing but tedium and desolation, so immature is he and so barren does he think himself to be. He has to imagine what the angels would say, so that his own good impulses (which create those angels) may gain in authority, and none of the dangers that surround his poor life make the least impression upon him until he hears that there are hobgoblins hiding in the wood. His moral life, to take shape at all, must appear to him in fantastic symbols. The history of these symbols is therefore the history of his soul.

There was in the beginning, so runs the Christian story, a great celestial King, wise and good, surrounded by a court of winged musicians and messengers. He had existed from all eternity, but had always intended, when the right moment should come, to create temporal beings, imperfect

copies of himself in various degrees. These, of which man was the chief, began their career in the year 4004 B.C., and they would live on an indefinite time, possibly, that chronological symmetry might not be violated, until A.D. 4004. The opening and close of this drama were marked by two magnificent tableaux. In the first, in obedience to the word of God, sun, moon, and stars, and earth with all her plants and animals, assumed their appropriate places, and nature sprang into being with all her laws. The first man was made out of clay, by a special act of God, and the first woman was fashioned from one of his ribs, extracted while he lay in a deep sleep. They were placed in an orchard where they often could see God, its owner, walking in the cool of the evening. He suffered them to range at will and eat of all the fruits he had planted save that of one tree only. But they, incited by a devil, transgressed this single prohibition, and were banished from that paradise with a curse upon their head, the man to live by the sweat of his brow and the woman to bear children in labour. These children possessed from the moment of conception the inordinate natures which their parents had acquired. They were born to sin and to find disorder and death everywhere within and without them.

At the same time God, lest the work of his hands should wholly perish, promised to redeem in his good season some of Adam's children and restore them to a natural life. This redemption was to come ultimately through a descendant of Eve, whose foot should bruise the head of the serpent. But it was to be prefigured by many partial and special redemptions. Thus, Noah was to be saved from the deluge, Lot from Sodom, Isaac from the sacrifice, Moses from Egypt, the captive Jews from Babylon, and all faithful souls from heathen forgetfulness and idolatry. For a certain tribe had been set apart from the beginning to keep alive the memory of God's judgments and promises, while the rest of mankind, abandoned to its natural depravity, sank deeper and deeper into crimes and vanities. The deluge that came to punish these evils did not avail to cure them. "The world was renewed [1] and the earth rose again above the bosom of the waters,

[1] Bossuet, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, Part. II. chap. i.

but in this renovation there remained eternally some trace of divine vengeance. Until the deluge all nature had been exceedingly hardy and vigorous, but by that vast flood of water which God had spread out over the earth, and by its long abiding there, all saps were diluted; the air, charged with too dense and heavy a moisture, bred ranker principles of corruption. The early constitution of the universe was weakened, and human life, from stretching as it had formerly done to near a thousand years, grew gradually briefer. Herbs and roots lost their primitive potency and stronger food had to be furnished to man by the flesh of other animals. . . . Death gained upon life and men felt themselves overtaken by a speedier chastisement. As day by day they sank deeper in their wickedness, it was but right they should daily, as it were, stick faster in their woe. The very change in nourishment made manifest their decline and degradation, since as they became feebler they became also more voracious and bloodthirsty."

Henceforth there were two spirits, two parties, or, as Saint Augustine called them, two cities in the world. The City of Satan, whatever its artifices in art, war, or philosophy, was essentially corrupt and impious. Its joy was but a comic mask and its beauty the whitening of a sepulchre. It stood condemned before God and before man's better conscience by its vanity, cruelty, and secret misery, by its ignorance of all that it truly behoved a man to know who was destined to immortality. Lost, as it seemed, within this Babylon, or visible only in its obscure and forgotten purlieus, lived on at the same time the City of God, the society of all the souls God predestined to salvation; a city which, however humble and inconspicuous it might seem on earth, counted its myriad transfigured citizens in heaven, and had its destinies, like its foundations, in eternity. To this City of God belonged, in the first place, the patriarchs and the prophets who, throughout their plaintive and ardent lives, were faithful to what echoes still remained of a primeval revelation, and waited patiently for the greater revelation to come. To the same city belonged the magi who followed a star till it halted over the stable in Bethlehem; Simeon, who divined the

present salvation of Israel; John the Baptist, who bore witness to the same and made straight its path; and Peter, to whom not flesh and blood, but the spirit of the Father in heaven, revealed the Lord's divinity. For salvation had indeed come with the fulness of time, not, as the carnal Jews had imagined it, in the form of an earthly restoration, but through the incarnation of the Son of God in the Virgin Mary, his death upon a cross, his descent into hell, and his resurrection at the third day according to the Scriptures. To the same city belonged finally all those who, believing in the reality and efficacy of Christ's mission, relied on his merits and followed his commandment of unearthly love.

All history was henceforth essentially nothing but the conflict between these two cities; two moralities, one natural, the other supernatural; two philosophies, one rational, the other revealed; two beauties, one corporeal, the other spiritual; two glories, one temporal, the other eternal; two institutions, one the world, the other the church. These, whatever their momentary alliances or compromises, were radically opposed and fundamentally alien to one another. Their conflict was to fill the ages until, when wheat and tares had long flourished together and exhausted between them the earth for whose substance they struggled, the harvest should come; the terrible day of reckoning when those who had believed the things of religion to be imaginary would behold with dismay the Lord visibly coming down through the clouds of heaven, the angels blowing their alarming trumpets, all generations of the dead rising from their graves, and judgment without appeal passed on every man, to the edification of the universal company and his own unspeakable joy or confusion. Whereupon the blessed would enter eternal bliss with God their master and the wicked everlasting torments with the devil whom they served.

The drama of history was thus to close upon a second tableau: long-robed and beatified cohorts passing above, amid various psalmodies, into an infinite luminous space, while below the damned, howling, writhing, and half transformed into loathsome beasts, should be engulfed in a fiery furnace. The two cities, always opposite in essence,

should thus be finally divided in existence, each bearing its natural fruits and manifesting its true nature.

Let the reader fill out this outline for himself with its thousand details ; let him remember the endless mysteries, arguments, martyrdoms, consecrations that carried out the sense and made vital the beauty of the whole. Let him pause before the phenomenon ; he can ill afford, if he wishes to understand history or the human mind, to let the apparition float by unchallenged without delivering up its secret. What shall we say of this Christian dream ?

Those who are still troubled by the fact that this dream is by many taken for a reality, and who are consequently obliged to defend themselves against it, as against some dangerous error in science or in philosophy, may be allowed to marshal arguments in its disproof. Such, however, is not my intention. Do we marshal arguments against the miraculous birth of Buddha, or the story of Cronos devouring his children ? We seek rather to honour the piety and to understand the poetry embodied in those fables. If it be said that those fables are believed by no one, I reply that those fables are or have been believed just as unhesitatingly as the Christian theology, and by men no less reasonable or learned than the unhappy apologists of our own ancestral creeds. Matters of religion should never be matters of controversy. We neither argue with a lover about his taste, nor condemn him, if we are just, for knowing so human a passion. That he harbours it is no indication of a want of sanity on his part in other matters. But while we acquiesce in his experience, and are glad he has it, we need no arguments to dissuade us from sharing it. Each man may have his own loves, but the object in each case is different. And so it is, or should be, in religion. Before the rise of those strange and fraudulent Hebraic pretensions there was no question among men about the national, personal, and poetic character of religious allegiance. It could never have been a duty to adopt a religion not one's own any more than a language, a coinage, or a costume not current in one's own country. The idea that religion contains a literal, not a symbolic, representation of truth and life is simply an impossible idea.

Whoever entertains it has not come within the region of profitable philosophizing on that subject. His science is not wide enough to cover all existence. He has not discovered that there can be no moral allegiance except to the ideal. His certitude and his arguments are no more pertinent to the religious question than would be the insults, blows, and murders to which, if he could, he would appeal in the next instance. Philosophy may describe unreason, as it may describe force ; it cannot hope to refute them.

32

PAGAN CUSTOM INFUSED INTO CHRISTIANITY

The western intellect, in order to accept the gospel, had to sublimate it into a neo-Platonic system of metaphysics. In like manner the western heart had to render Christianity congenial and adequate by a rich infusion of pagan custom and sentiment. This adaptation was more gentle and facile than might be supposed. We are too much inclined to impute an abstract and ideal Christianity to the polyglot souls of early Christians, and to ignore that mysterious and miraculous side of later paganism from which Christian cultus and ritual are chiefly derived. In the third century Christianity and devout paganism were, in a religious sense, closely akin ; each differed much less from the other than from that religion which at other epochs had borne or should bear its own name. Had Julian the Apostate succeeded in his enterprise he would not have rescued anything which the admirers of classic paganism could at all rejoice in ; a disciple of Iamblichus could not but plunge headlong into the same sea of superstition and dialectic which had submerged Christianity. Reason had suffered a general eclipse, but civilization, although decayed, still subsisted, and a certain scholastic discipline, a certain speculative habit, and many an ancient religious usage remained in the world. The people could change their gods, but not the spirit in which they worshipped them. Christianity had insinuated itself almost unobserved into a society full of rooted traditions. The first disciples had

been disinherited Jews, with religious habits which men of other races and interests could never have adopted intelligently; the church was accordingly wise enough to perpetuate in its practice at least an indispensable minimum of popular paganism.

Any one who enters a Catholic church with an intelligent interpreter will at once perceive the immense distance which separates the official and impersonal ritual sung behind the altar rails from the daily prayers and practices of Catholic people. The latter refer to the real exigences of daily life and serve to express or reorganize personal passions. While mass is being celebrated the old woman will tell her beads, lost in a vague rumination over her own troubles; while the priests chant something unintelligible about Abraham or Nebuchadnezzar, the housewife will light her wax candles, duly blessed for the occasion, before Saint Barbara, to be protected thereby from the lightning; and while the preacher is repeating, by rote, dialectical subtleties about the union of the two natures in Christ's person, a listener's fancy may float sadly over the mystery of love and of life, and (being himself without resources in the premises) he may order a mass to be said for the repose of some departed soul.

In a Catholic country every spot and every man has a particular patron. These patrons are sometimes local worthies, canonized by tradition or by the Roman see, but no less often they are simply local appellations of Christ or the Virgin, appellations which are known theoretically to refer all to the same *numen*, but which practically possess diverse religious values; for the miracles and intercessions attributed to the Virgin under one title are far from being miracles and intercessions attributable to her under another. He who has been all his life devout to Loreto will not place any special reliance on the Pillar at Saragossa. A bereaved mother will not fly to the Immaculate Conception for comfort, but of course to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. Each religious order and all the laity more or less affiliated to it will cultivate special saints and special mysteries. There are also particular places and days on which graces are granted, as not on others, and the quantity of such graces is measurable by canonic

standards. So many days of remitted penance correspond to a work of a certain merit, for there is a celestial currency in which mulcts and remissions may be accurately summed and subtracted by angelic recorders. One man's spiritual earnings may by gift be attributed and imputed to another, a belief which may seem arbitrary and superstitious but which is really a natural corollary to fundamental doctrines like the atonement, the communion of saints, and intercession for the dead and living.

Another phase of the same natural religion is seen in frequent festivals, in the consecration of buildings, ships, fields, labours, and seasons ; in intercessions by the greater dead for the living and by the living for the lesser dead—a perfect survival of heroes and penates on the one hand and of pagan funeral rites and commemorations on the other. Add Lent with its carnival, ember-days, all saints' and all souls', Christmas with its magi or its Saint Nicholas, Saint Agnes's and Saint Valentine's days with their profane associations, a saint for finding lost objects and another for prospering amourettes, since all great and tragic loves have their inevitable patrons in Christ and the Virgin, in Mary Magdalene, and in the mystics innumerable. This, with what more could easily be rehearsed, makes a complete paganism within Christian tradition, a paganism for which little basis can be found in the gospel, the mass, the breviary, or the theologians.

Yet these accretions were as well authenticated as the substructure, for they rested on human nature. To feel, for instance, the special efficacy of your village Virgin or of the miraculous Christ whose hermitage is perched on the overhanging hill, is a genuine experience. The principle of it is clear and simple. Those shrines, those images, the festivals associated with them, have entered your mind together with your earliest feelings. Your first glimpses of mortal vicissitudes have coincided with the awe and glitter of sacramental moments in which those *numina* were invoked ; and on that deeper level of experience, in those lower reaches of irrationalism in which such impressions lie, they constitute a mystic resource subsisting beneath all conventions and overt knowledge. When the doctors blunder—as they commonly do—the saints may find a

cure ; after all, the saints' success in medicine seems to a crude empiricism almost as probable as the physicians'. Special and local patrons are the original gods, and whatever religious value speculative and cosmic deities retain they retain surreptitiously, by virtue of those very bonds with human interests and passionate desires which ancestral demons once borrowed from the hearth they guarded, the mountain they haunted, or the sacrifice they inhaled with pleasure, until their hearts softened toward their worshippers.

33

CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN

As the God of religion differs from that of metaphysics, so does the Christ of tradition differ from that of our critical historians. Even if we took the literal narrative of the Gospels and accepted it as all we could know of Christ, without allowing ourselves any imaginative interpretation of the central figure, we should get an ideal of him, I will not say very different from that familiar to St. Francis or St. Theresa, but even from that in the English prayer-book. The Christ men have loved and adored is an ideal of their own hearts, the construction of an ever-present personality, living and intimately understood, out of the fragments of story and doctrine connected with a name. This subjective image has inspired all the prayers, all the conversions, all the penances, charities, and sacrifices, as well as half the art of the Christian world.

The Virgin Mary, whose legend is so meagre, but whose power over the Catholic imagination is so great, is an even clearer illustration of this inward building up of an ideal form. Everything is here spontaneous sympathetic expansion of two given events : the incarnation and the crucifixion. The figure of the Virgin, found in these mighty scenes, is gradually clarified and developed, until we come to the thought on the one hand of her freedom from original sin, and on the other to that of her universal maternity. We thus attain the conception of one of the noblest of conceivable rôles and of one of the most beautiful

of characters. It is a pity that a foolish iconoclasm should so long have deprived the Protestant mind of the contemplation of this ideal.

Perhaps it is a sign of the average imaginative dulness or fatigue of certain races and epochs that they so readily abandon these supreme creations. For, if we are hopeful, why should we not believe that the best we can fancy is also the truest; and if we are distrustful in general of our prophetic gifts, why should we cling only to the most mean and formless of our illusions? From the beginning to the end of our perceptive and imaginative activity, we are synthesizing the material of experience into unities the independent reality of which is beyond proof, nay, beyond the possibility of a shadow of evidence. And yet the life of intelligence, like the joy of contemplation, lies entirely in the formation and inter-relation of these unities. This activity yields us all the images which we can compose, and endows them with the finer and more intimate part of their beauty. The most perfect of these forms, judged by its affinity to our powers and its stability in the presence of our experience, is the one with which we should be content; no other kind of veracity could add to its value.

The greatest feats of synthesis which the human mind has yet accomplished will, indeed, be probably surpassed and all ideals yet formed be superseded, because they were not based upon enough experience, or did not fit that experience with adequate precision. It is also possible that changes in the character of the facts, or in the powers of intelligence, should necessitate a continual reconstruction of our world. But unless human nature suffers an inconceivable change, the chief intellectual and æsthetic value of our ideas will always come from the creative action of the imagination.

34

ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

To a person sufficiently removed by time or by philosophy from the controversies of sects, orthodoxy must always appear right and heresy wrong; for he sees in orthodoxy

the product of the creative mind, of faith and constructive logic, but in heresy only the rebellion of some partial interest or partial insight against the corollaries of a formative principle imperfectly grasped and obeyed with hesitation. At a distance, the criticism that disintegrates any great product of art or mind must always appear short-sighted and unamiable. Socrates, invoking the local deities of brooks and meadows, or paying the debt of a cock to Asclepius (in thanksgiving, it is said, for a happy death), is more reasonable and noble to our mind than are the hard denials of Xenophanes or Theodorus. Nor were the heretics of a later age less unintelligent. The principle by which the Christian system had developed, although reapplied by the Protestants to their own inner life, was not understood by them in its historical applications. They had little sympathy with the spiritual needs and habits of that pagan society in which Christianity had grown up. That society had found in Christianity a sort of last love, a rejuvenating supersensible hope, and had bequeathed to the gospel of redemption, for its better embodiment and ornament, all its own wealth of art, philosophy, and devotion. This embodiment of Christianity represented a civilization through which the Teutonic races had not passed and which they never could have produced ; it appealed to a kind of imagination and sentiment which was foreign to them. This embodiment, accordingly, was the object of their first and fiercest attack, really because it was unsympathetic to their own temperament but ostensibly because they could not find its basis in those Hebraic elements of Christianity which make up the greater bulk of the Bible. They did not value the sublime aspiration of Christianity to be not something Hebraic or Teutonic but something catholic and human ; and they blamed everything which went beyond the accidental limits of their own sympathies and the narrow scope of their own experience.

Yet it was only by virtue of this complement inherited from paganism, or at least supplied by the instincts and traditions on which paganism had reposed, that Christianity could claim to approach a humane universality or to achieve an imaginative adequacy.

Nor was it right or fitting to make a merely theoretical or ethical synthesis. Doctrine must find its sensible echo in worship, in art, in the feasts and fasts of the year. Only when thus permeating life and expressing itself to every sense and faculty can a religion be said to have reached completion; only then has the imagination exhausted its means of utterance.

The great success which Christianity achieved in this immense undertaking makes it, after classic antiquity, the most important phase in the history of mankind. It is clear, however, that this success was not complete. That fallacy from which the pagan religion alone has been free, that πρῶτον ψεῦδος of all fanaticism, the natural but hopeless misunderstanding of imagining that poetry in order to be religion, in order to be the inspiration of life, must first deny that it is poetry and deceive us about the facts with which we have to deal—this misunderstanding has marred the work of the Christian imagination and condemned it, if we may trust appearances, to be transitory. For by this misunderstanding Christian doctrine was brought into conflict with reality, of which it pretends to prejudge the character, and also into conflict with what might have been its own elements, with all excluded religious instincts and imaginative ideals. Human life is always essentially the same, and therefore a religion which, like Christianity, seizes the essence of that life, ought to be an eternal religion. But it may forfeit that privilege by entangling itself with a particular account of matters of fact, matters irrelevant to its ideal significance, and further by intrenching itself, by virtue of that entanglement, in an inadequate regimen or a too narrow imaginative development, thus putting its ideal authority in jeopardy by opposing it to other intuitions and practices no less religious than its own.

Can Christianity escape these perils? Can it reform its claims, or can it overwhelm all opposition and take the human heart once more by storm? The future alone can decide. The greatest calamity, however, would be that which seems, alas! not unlikely to befall our immediate posterity, namely, that while Christianity should be discredited, no other religion, more disillusioned and not less inspired, should come to take its place. Until the

imagination should have time to recover and to reassert its legitimate and kindly power, the European races would then be reduced to confessing that while they had mastered the mechanical forces of nature, both by science and by the arts, they had become incapable of mastering or understanding themselves, and that, bewildered like the beasts by the revolutions of the heavens and by their own irrational passions, they could find no way of uttering the ideal meaning of their life.

35

PROTESTANTISM

Taken externally, Protestantism is, of course, a form of Christianity ; it retains the Bible and a more or less copious selection of patristic doctrines. But in its spirit and inward inspiration it is something quite as independent of Judea as of Rome. Its character may be indicated by saying that it builds religion on conscience, on an emotional freedom deeply respecting itself but scarcely deciphering its purposes. It is the self-consciousness of a spirit in process of incubation, jealous of its potentialities, averse to definitions and externalities of any kind because it can itself discern nothing fixed or final. It is adventurous and puzzled by the world, full of rudimentary virtues and clear fire, energetic, faithful, rebellious to cynical suggestions, inexpert in matters of art and mind. It boasts, not without cause, of its depth and purity ; but this depth and purity are those of any formless and primordial substance. It keeps unsullied that antecedent integrity which is at the bottom of every living thing and at its core ; it is not acquainted with that ulterior integrity, that sanctity, which might be attained at the summit of experience through renunciation and speculative dominion. It accordingly mistakes vitality, both in itself and in the universe, for spiritual life.

This underlying Teutonic mood, which we must call Protestantism for lack of a better name, is anterior to Christianity and can survive it. To identify it with the gospel may have seemed possible so long as, in opposition

to pagan Christianity, the Teutonic spirit could appeal to the gospel for support. The gospel has indeed nothing pagan about it, but it has also nothing Teutonic ; and the momentary alliance of two such disparate forces must naturally cease with the removal of the common enemy which alone united them. The gospel is unworldly, disenchanted, ascetic ; it treats ecclesiastical establishments with tolerant contempt, conforming to them with indifference ; it regards prosperity as a danger, earthly ties as a burden, Sabbaths as a superstition ; it revels in miracles ; it is democratic and antinomian ; it loves contemplation, poverty, and solitude ; it meets sinners with sympathy and heartfelt forgiveness, but Pharisees and Puritans with biting scorn. In a word, it is a product of the East, where all things are old and equal and a profound indifference to the business of earth breeds a silent dignity and high sadness in the spirit. Protestantism is the exact opposite of all this. It is convinced of the importance of success and prosperity ; it abominates what is disreputable ; contemplation seems to it idleness, solitude selfishness, and poverty a sort of dishonourable punishment. It is constrained and punctilious in righteousness ; it regards a married and industrious life as typically godly, and there is a sacredness to it, as of a vacant Sabbath, in the unoccupied higher spaces which such an existence leaves for the soul. It is sentimental, its ritual is meagre and unctuous, it expects no miracles, it thinks optimism akin to piety, and regards profitable enterprise and practical ambition as a sort of moral vocation. Its Evangelicalism lacks the notes, so prominent in the gospel, of disillusion, humility, and speculative detachment. Its benevolence is optimistic and aims at raising men to a conventional well-being ; it thus misses the inner appeal of Christian charity which, being merely remedial in physical matters, begins by renunciation and looks to spiritual freedom and peace.

Protestantism was therefore attached from the first to the Old Testament, in which Hebrew fervour appears in its worldly and pre-rational form. It is not democratic in the same sense as post-rational religions, which see in the soul an exile from some other sphere wearing for the

moment, perhaps, a beggar's disguise: it is democratic only in the sense of having a popular origin and bending easily to popular forces. Swayed as it is by public opinion, it is necessarily conventional in its conception of duty and earnestly materialistic; for the meaning of the word vanity never crosses the vulgar heart. In fine, it is the religion of a race young, wistful, and adventurous, feeling its latent potentialities, vaguely assured of an earthly vocation, and possessing, like the barbarian and the healthy child, pure but unchastened energies.

Protestantism in its vital elements was thus a perfectly new, a perfectly spontaneous religion. The illusion that it was a return to primitive Christianity was useful for controversial purposes and helped to justify the iconoclastic passions of the time; but this illusion did not touch the true essence of Protestantism, nor the secret of its legitimacy and power as a religion. Indeed we may say that the typical Protestant was himself his own church and made the selection and interpretation of tradition according to the demands of his personal spirit.

Protestantism has the unmistakable character of a genuine religion, a character which tradition passively accepted and dogma regarded as so much external truth may easily forfeit. It is in correspondence with the actual ideals and instincts of the believer; it is the self-assertion of a living soul. Its meagreness and eccentricity are simply evidences of its personal basis. It is in full harmony with the practical impulses it comes to sanction, and accordingly it gains in efficiency all that it loses in dignity or truth.

It was this youthful religion—profound, barbaric, poetical—that the Teutonic races insinuated into Christianity and substituted for that last sigh of two expiring worlds. In the end, with the complete crumbling away of Christian dogma and tradition, Absolute Egotism appeared openly on the surface in the shape of German philosophy. This form, which Protestantism assumed at a moment of high tension and reckless self-sufficiency, it will doubtless shed in turn and take on new expressions; but that declaration of independence on the part of the Teutonic spirit marks emphatically its exit from Christianity

and the end of that series of transformations in which it took the Bible and patristic dogma for its materials. It now bids fair to apply itself instead to social life and natural science and to attempt to feed its Protean hunger directly from these more homely sources.

The patristic systems, though weak in their foundations, were extraordinarily wise and comprehensive in their working out; and while they inverted life they preserved it. Dogma added to the universe fabulous perspectives; it interpolated also innumerable incidents and powers which gave a new dimension to experience. Yet the old world remained standing in its strange setting, like the Pantheon in modern Rome; and, what is more important, the natural springs of human action were still acknowledged, and if a supernatural discipline was imposed, and the pursuit of earthly happiness seemed hopeless, nature was not destroyed by its novel expression, nor did reason die in the cloister: it hibernated there, and could come back to its own in due season, only a little dazed and weakened by its long confinement. Such, at least, is the situation in Catholic regions, where the patristic philosophy has not appreciably varied. Among Protestants Christian dogma has taken a new and ambiguous direction, which has at once minimized its disturbing effect in practice and isolated its primary illusion. The symptoms have been cured and the disease driven in.

36

PIETY

PIETY, in its nobler and Roman sense, may be said to mean man's reverent attachment to the sources of his being and the steadying of his life by that attachment. A soul is but the last bubble of a long fermentation in the world. If we wish to live associated with permanent racial interests we must plant ourselves on a broad historic and human foundation, we must absorb and interpret the past which has made us, so that we may hand down its heritage reinforced, if possible, and in no way undermined or denaturalized. This consciousness that the human spirit

is derived and responsible, that all its functions are heritages and trusts, involves a sentiment of gratitude and duty which we may call piety.

Piety esteems things apart from their intrinsic worth, on account of their relation to the agent's person and fortune. Yet such esteem is perfectly rational, partiality in man's affections and allegiance being justified by the partial nature and local status of his life. Piety is the spirit's acknowledgment of its incarnation. This physical bond should not, indeed, disturb the intellect in its proper function or warp its judgments; you should not, under guise of tenderness, become foolish and attribute to your father or child greater stature or cleverness or goodness than he actually possesses. To do so is a natural foible but no part of piety or true loyalty. It is one thing to lack a heart and another to possess eyes and a just imagination. Indeed, piety is never so beautiful and touching, never so thoroughly humane and invincible, as when it is joined to an impartial intellect, conscious of the relativity involved in existence and able to elude, through imaginative sympathy, the limits set to personal life by circumstance and private duty. As a man dies nobly when, awaiting his own extinction, he is interested to the last in what will continue to be the interests and joys of others, so he is most profoundly pious who loves unreservedly a country, friends, and associations which he knows very well to be not the most beautiful on earth, and who, being wholly content in his personal capacity with his natural conditions, does not need to begrudge other things whatever speculative admiration they may truly deserve. The ideal in this polyglot world, where reason can receive only local and temporal expression, is to understand all languages and to speak but one, so as to unite, in a manly fashion, comprehension with propriety.

Mankind at large is, to some minds, an object of piety. But this religion of humanity is rather a desideratum than a fact. Piety towards mankind must be three-fourths pity. There are indeed specific human virtues, but they are those necessary to existence, like patience and courage. Supported on these indispensable habits, mankind always carries an indefinite load of misery and vice. Life spreads

rankly in every wrong and impracticable direction as well as in profitable paths, and the slow and groping struggle with its own ignorance, inertia, and folly, leaves it covered in every age of history with filth and blood. It would hardly be possible to exaggerate man's wretchedness if it were not so easy to overestimate his sensibility. There is a *fond* of unhappiness in every bosom, but the depths are seldom probed; and there is no doubt that sometimes frivolity and sometimes sturdy habit helps to keep attention on the surface and to cover up the inner void.

To worship mankind as it is would be to deprive it of what alone makes it akin to the divine—its aspiration. For this human dust lives; this misery and crime are dark in contrast to an imagined excellence; they are lighted up by a prospect of good. Man is not adorable, but he adores, and the object of his adoration may be discovered within him and elicited from his own soul. In this sense the religion of humanity is the only religion, all others being sparks and abstracts of the same. The indwelling ideal lends all the gods their divinity. No power, either physical or psychical, has the least moral prerogative nor any just place in religion at all unless it supports and advances the ideal native to the worshipper's soul. Without moral society between the votary and his god religion is pure idolatry; and even idolatry would be impossible but for the suspicion that somehow the brute force exorcized in prayer might help or mar some human undertaking.

There is a philosophic piety which has the universe for its object. This feeling, common to ancient and modern Stoics, has an obvious justification in man's dependence upon the natural world and in its service to many sides of the mind. Such justification of cosmic piety is rather obscured than supported by the euphemisms and ambiguities in which these philosophers usually indulge in their attempt to preserve the customary religious unction. For the more they personify the universe and give it the name of God the more they turn it into a devil. The universe, so far as we can observe it, is a wonderful and immense engine; its extent, its order, its beauty, its cruelty, make it alike impressive. If we dramatize its life and conceive

its spirit, we are filled with wonder, terror, and amusement, so magnificent is that spirit, so prolific, inexorable, grammatical, and dull. Like all animals and plants, the cosmos has its own way of doing things, not wholly rational nor ideally best, but patient, fatal, and fruitful. Great is this organism of mud and fire, terrible this vast, painful, glorious experiment. Why should we not look on the universe with piety? Is it not our substance? Are we made of other clay? All our possibilities lie from eternity hidden in its bosom. It is the dispenser of all our joys. We may address it without superstitious terrors; it is not wicked. It follows its own habits abstractedly; it can be trusted to be true to its word. Society is not impossible between it and us, and since it is the source of all our energies, the home of all our happiness, shall we not cling to it and praise it, seeing that it vegetates so grandly and so sadly, and that it is not for us to blame it for what, doubtless, it never knew that it did? Where there is such infinite and laborious potency there is room for every hope. If we should abstain from judging a father's errors or a mother's foibles, why should we pronounce sentence on the ignorant crimes of the universe, which have passed into our own blood? The universe is the true Adam, the creation the true fall; and as we have never blamed our mythical first parent very much, in spite of the disproportionate consequences of his sin, because we felt that he was but human and that we, in his place, might have sinned too, so we may easily forgive our real ancestor, whose connatural sin we are from moment to moment committing, since it is only the necessary rashness of venturing to be without fore-knowing the price or the fruits of existence.

37

SPIRITUALITY

In honouring the sources of life, piety is retrospective. It collects, as it were, food for morality, and fortifies it with natural and historic nutriment. But a digestive and formative principle must exist to assimilate this

nutriment ; a direction and an ideal have to be imposed on these gathered forces. So that religion has a second and a higher side, which looks to the end toward which we move, as piety looks to the conditions of progress and to the sources from which we draw our energies. This aspiring side of religion may be called spirituality. Spirituality is nobler than piety, because what would fulfil our being and make it worth having is what alone lends value to that being's source. Nothing spiritual is instrumental. Spirit is the music and fruition of all things. The gift of existence would be worthless unless existence was good and supported at least a possible happiness. A man is spiritual when he lives in the presence of the ideal, and whether he eat or drink does so for the sake of a true and ultimate good. He is spiritual when he envisages his goal so frankly that his whole material life becomes a transparent and transitive vehicle, an instrument which scarcely arrests attention but allows the spirit to use it economically and with perfect detachment and freedom.

There is no need that this ideal should be pompously or mystically described. A simple life is its own reward, and continually realizes its function. Though a spiritual man may perfectly well go through intricate processes of thought and attend to very complex affairs, his single eye, fixed on a rational purpose, will simplify morally the natural chaos it looks upon and will remain free. This spiritual mastery is, of course, no slashing and forced synthesis of things into a system of philosophy which, even if it were thinkable, would leave the conceived logical machine without ideality and without responsiveness to actual interests ; it is rather an inward aim and fixity in affection that knows what to take and what to leave in a world over which it diffuses something of its own peace. It threads its way through the landscape with so little temptation to distraction that it can salute every irrelevant thing, as Saint Francis did the sun and moon, with courtesy and a certain affectionate detachment.

Spirituality likes to say, Behold the lilies of the field ! For its secret has the same simplicity as their vegetative art ; only spirituality has succeeded in adding consciousness

without confusing instinct. This success, unfortunately so rare in man's life as to seem paradoxical, is its whole achievement. Spirituality ought to have been a matter of course, since conscious existence has inherent value and there is no intrinsic ground why it should smother that value in alien ambitions and servitudes. But spirituality, though so natural and obvious a thing, is subject, like the lilies' beauty, to corruption. I know not what army of microbes evidently invaded from the beginning the soul's basis and devoured its tissues, so that sophistication and bad dreams entirely obscured her limpidity.

38

PRAYER

It is in the very essence of prayer to regard a denial as possible. There would be no sense in defining and begging for the better thing if that better thing had at any rate to be. The possibility of defeat is one of the circumstances with which meditation must square our hopes; seeing that our prayer may not be granted, what in that case should we pray for next? Now the order of nature is in many respects well known, and it is clear that all realizable wishes must not transgress certain bounds. The practical ideal, that which under the circumstances it is best to aim at and pray for, will not rebel against destiny. Conformity is an element in all religion and submission in all prayer; not because what must be is best, but because the best that may be pursued rationally lies within the possible, and can be hatched only in the general womb of being. The prayer, "Thy will be done," if it is to remain a prayer, must not be degraded from its original meaning, which was that an unfulfilled ideal should be fulfilled; it expressed aspiration after the best, not willingness to be satisfied with anything. Yet the inevitable must be accepted, and it is easier to change the human will than the laws of nature. To wean the mind from extravagant desires and teach it to find excellence in what life affords, when life is made as worthy as possible, is a part of wisdom

and religion. Prayer, by confronting the ideal with experience and fate, tends to render that ideal humble, practical, and efficacious.

A sense for human limitations, however, has its foil in the notion of deity, which is nothing but the ideal of man freed from those limitations which a humble and wise man accepts for himself, but which a spiritual man never ceases to feel as limitations. Man, for instance, is mortal, and his whole animal and social economy is built on that fact, so that his practical ideal must start on that basis, and make the best of it; but immortality is essentially better, and the eternal is in many ways constantly present to a noble mind; the gods therefore are immortal, and to speak their language in prayer is to learn to see all things, as they do and as reason must, under the form of eternity. The gods are furthermore no respecters of persons; they are just, for it is man's ideal to be so. Prayer, since it addresses deity, will in the end blush to be selfish and partial; the majesty of the divine mind envisaged and consulted will tend to pass into the human mind.

This use of prayer has not been conspicuous in Christian times, because, instead of assimilating the temporal to the eternal, men have assimilated the eternal to the temporal, being perturbed fanatics in religion rather than poets and idealists. Pagan devotion, on the other hand, was full of this calmer spirit. The gods, being frankly natural, could be truly ideal; I mean, they could express what some actual creature genuinely aspired to become. They embodied what was fairest in human life and loved men who resembled them, so that it was delightful and ennobling to see their images everywhere, and to keep their names and story perpetually in mind. They did not by their influence alienate man from his appropriate happiness, but they perfected it by their presence. Peopling all places, changing their forms as all living things must according to place and circumstance, they showed how all kinds of being, if perfect in their kind, might be perfectly good. They asked for a reverence consistent with reason, and exercised prerogatives that left man free. Their worship was a perpetual lesson in humanity, moderation, and beauty. Something pre-rational and monstrous often

peeped out behind their serenity, as it does beneath the human soul, and there was certainly no lack of wildness and mystic horror in their apparitions. The ideal must needs betray those elemental forces on which, after all, it rests; but reason exists to exorcize their madness and win them over to a steady expression of themselves and of the good.

Prayer, in fine, though it accomplishes nothing material, constitutes something spiritual. It will not bring rain, but until rain comes it may cultivate hope and resignation and may prepare the heart for any issue, opening up a vista in which human prosperity will appear in its conditioned existence and conditional value. A candle wasting itself before an image will prevent no misfortune, but it may bear witness to some silent hope or relieve some sorrow by expressing it; it may soften a little the bitter sense of impotence which would consume a mind aware of physical dependence but not of spiritual dominion. Worship, supplication, reliance on the gods, express both these things in an appropriate parable. Physical impotence is expressed by man's appeal for help; moral dominion by belief in God's omnipotence. This belief may afterwards seem to be contradicted by events. It would be so in truth if God's omnipotence stood for a material magical control of events by the values they were to generate. But the believer knows in his heart, in spite of the confused explanations he may give of his feelings, that a material efficacy is not the test of his faith. His faith will survive any outward disappointment. In fact, it will grow by that discipline and not become truly religious until it ceases to be a foolish expectation of improbable things and rises on stepping-stones of its material disappointments into a spiritual peace. What would sacrifice be but a risky investment if it did not redeem us from the love of those things which it asks us to surrender? What would be the miserable fruit of an appeal to God which, after bringing us face to face with him, left us still immersed in what we could have enjoyed without him? The real use and excuse for magic is this, that by enticing us, in the service of natural lusts, into a region above natural instrumentalities, it accustoms us to that rarer atmosphere, so that we

may learn to breathe it for its own sake. By the time we discover the mechanical futility of religion we may have begun to blush at the thought of using religion mechanically ; for what should be the end of life if friendship with the gods is a means only ? When thaumaturgy is discredited, the childish desire to work miracles may itself have passed away. Before we weary of the attempt to hide and piece out our mortality, our concomitant immortality may have dawned upon us. While we are waiting for the command to take up our bed and walk we may hear a voice saying : Thy sins are forgiven thee.

39

THE FEAR OF DEATH

Dying is something ghastly, as being born is something ridiculous ; and, even if no pain were involved in quitting or entering this world, we might still say what Dante's Francesca says of it : *Il modo ancor m' offende,*—" I shudder at the way of it." If the fear of death were merely the fear of dying, it would be better dealt with by medicine than by argument. There is, or there might be, an art of dying well, of dying painlessly, willingly, and in season,—as in those noble partings which Attic gravestones depict,—especially if we were allowed to choose our own time.

But the radical fear of death, I venture to think, is something quite different. It is the love of life. This love is not something rational, or founded on experience of life. It is something antecedent and spontaneous. It teaches every animal to seek its food and its mate, and to protect its offspring ; as also to resist or fly from all injury to the body, and most of all from threatened death. It is the original impulse by which good is discriminated from evil, and hope from fear.

Nothing could be more futile, therefore, than to marshal arguments against that fear of death which is merely another name for the energy of life, or the tendency to self-preservation. What is most dreaded is not the agony

of dying, nor yet the strange impossibility that when we do not exist we should suffer for not existing. What is dreaded is the defeat of a present will directed upon life and its various undertakings. Such a present will cannot be argued away, but it may be weakened by contradictions arising within it, by the irony of experience, or by ascetic discipline. To introduce ascetic discipline, to bring out the irony of experience, to expose the self-contradictions of the will, would be the true means of mitigating the love of life ; and if the love of life were extinguished, the fear of death, like smoke rising from that fire, would have vanished also.

The force, for instance, of the great passage against the fear of death, at the end of the third book of Lucretius, comes chiefly from the picture it draws of the madness of life. His philosophy deprecates covetousness, ambition, love, and religion ; it takes a long step towards the surrender of life, by surrendering all in life that is ardent, on the ground that it is painful in the end and ignominious. To escape from it all is a great deliverance. And since genius must be ardent about something, Lucretius pours out his enthusiasm on Epicurus, who brought this deliverance and was the saviour of mankind. Yet this was only a beginning of salvation, and the same principles carried further would have delivered us from the Epicurean life and what it retained that was Greek and naturalistic : science, friendship, and the healthy pleasures of the body. Had it renounced these things also, Epicureanism would have become altogether ascetic, a thorough system of mortification, or the pursuit of death. To those who sincerely pursue death, death is no evil, but the highest good. No need in that case of elaborate arguments to prove that death should not be feared, because it is nothing ; for in spite of being nothing—or rather because it is nothing —death can be loved by a fatigued and disillusioned spirit, just as in spite of being nothing—or rather because it is nothing—it must be hated and feared by every vigorous animal.

40

PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Among the blind, the retina having lost its function, the rest of the skin is said to recover its primordial sensitiveness to distance and light, so that the sightless have a clearer premonition of objects about them than seeing people could have in the dark. So when reason and the ordinary processes of sense are in abeyance a certain universal sensibility seems to return to the soul; influences at other times not appreciable make then a sensible impression, and automatic reactions may be run through in response to a stimulus normally quite insufficient. Now the complexity of nature is prodigious; everything that happens leaves, like buried cities, almost indelible traces which an eye, by chance attentive and duly prepared, can manage to read, recovering for a moment the image of an extinct life. Symbols, illegible to reason, can thus sometimes read themselves out in trance and madness. Faint vestiges may be found in matter of forms which it once wore, or which, like a perfume, impregnated and got lodgment within it. Slight echoes may suddenly reconstitute themselves in the mind's silence; and a half-stunned consciousness may catch brief glimpses of long-lost and irrelevant things. Real ghosts are such reverberations of the past, exceeding ordinary imagination and discernment both in vividness and in fidelity; they may not be explicable without appealing to material influences subtler than those ordinarily recognized, as they are obviously not discoverable without some derangement and hypertrophy of the senses.

That such subtler influences should exist is entirely consonant with reason and experience; but only a hankering tenderness for superstition, a failure to appreciate the function both of religion and of science, can lead to reverence for such oracular gibberish as these influences provoke. The world is weary of experimenting with magic. In utter seriousness and with immense solemnity whole races have given themselves up to exploiting these shabby mysteries; and while a new survey of the facts, in the

light of natural science and psychology, is certainly not superfluous, it can be expected to lead to nothing but a more detailed and conscientious description of natural processes. The thought of employing such investigations to save at the last moment religious doctrines founded on moral ideas is a pathetic blunder ; the obscene supernatural has nothing to do with rational religion. If it were discovered that wretched echoes of a past life could be actually heard by putting one's ear long enough to a tomb, and if (*per impossibile*) those echoes could be legitimately attributed to another mind, and to the very mind, indeed, whose former body was interred there, a melancholy chapter would indeed be added to man's earthly fortunes, since it would appear that even after death he retained, under certain conditions, a fatal attachment to his dead body and to the other material instruments of his earthly life. Obviously such a discovery would teach us more about dying than about immortality ; the truths disclosed, since they would be disclosed by experiment and observation, would be psycho-physical truths, implying nothing about what a truly disembodied life might be, if one were attainable ; for a disembodied life could by no possibility betray itself in spectres, rumblings, and spasms. Actual thunders from Sinai and an actual discovery of two stone tables would have been utterly irrelevant to the moral authority of the ten commandments or to the existence of a truly supreme being. No less irrelevant to a supramundane immortality is the length of time during which human spirits may be condemned to operate on earth after their bodies are quiet. In other words, spectral survivals would at most enlarge our conception of the soul's physical basis, spreading out the area of its manifestations ; they could not possibly, seeing the survivals are physical, reveal the disembodied existence of the soul.

41

A FUTURE LIFE

MANY a man dies too soon and some are born in the wrong age or station. Could these persons drink at the fountain

of youth at least once more they might do themselves fuller justice and cut a better figure at last in the universe. Most people think they have stuff in them for greater things than time suffers them to perform. To imagine a second career is a pleasing antidote for ill-fortune; the poor soul wants another chance. But how should a future life be constituted if it is to satisfy this demand, and how long need it last? It would evidently have to go on in an environment closely analogous to earth; I could not, for instance, write in another world the epics which the necessity of earning my living may have stifled here, did that other world contain no time, no heroic struggles, or no metrical language. Nor is it clear that my epics, to be perfect, would need to be quite endless. If what is foiled in me is really poetic genius and not simply a tendency toward perpetual motion, it would not help me if in heaven, in lieu of my dreamt-of epics, I were allowed to beget several robust children. In a word, if hereafter I am to be the same man improved I must find myself in the same world corrected. Were I transformed into a cherub or transported into a timeless ecstasy, it is hard to see in what sense I should continue to exist. Those results might be interesting in themselves and might enrich the universe; they would not prolong my life nor retrieve my disasters. The universe doubtless contains all sorts of experiences, better and worse than the human; but it is idle to attribute to a particular man a life divorced from his circumstances and from his body.

For this reason a future life is after all best represented by those frankly material ideals which most Christians —being Platonists—are wont to despise. It would be genuine happiness for a Jew to rise again in the flesh and live for ever in Ezekiel's New Jerusalem, with its ceremonial glories and civic order. It would be truly agreeable for any man to sit in well-watered gardens with Mohammed, clad in green silks, drinking delicious sherbets, and transfixed by the gazelle-like glance of some young girl, all innocence and fire. Amid such scenes a man might remain himself and might fulfil hopes that he had actually cherished on earth. He might also find his friends again, which in somewhat generous minds is perhaps the thought that

chiefly sustains interest in a posthumous existence. But to recognize his friends a man must find them in their bodies, with their familiar habits, voices, and interests; for it is surely an insult to affection to say that he could find them in an eternal formula expressing their idiosyncrasy. When, however, it is clearly seen that another life, to supplement this one, must closely resemble it, does not the magic of immortality altogether vanish? Is such a reduplication of earthly society at all credible? And the prospect of awakening again among houses and trees, among children and dotards, among wars and rumours of wars, still fettered to one personality and one accidental past, still uncertain of the future, is not this prospect wearisome and deeply repulsive? Having passed through these things once and bequeathed them to posterity, is it not time for each soul to rest?

Dogmas about such a posthumous experience find some shadowy support in various illusions and superstitions that surround death, but they are developed into articulate prophecies chiefly by certain moral demands. One of these requires rewards and punishments more emphatic and sure than those which conduct meets with in this world. Another requires merely a more favourable and complete opportunity for the soul's development. Considerations like these are pertinent to moral philosophy. It touches the notion of duty whether an exact hedonistic retribution is to be demanded for what is termed merit and guilt: so that without such supernatural remuneration virtue, perhaps, would be discredited and deprived of a motive. It likewise touches the ideality and nobleness of life whether human aims can be realized satisfactorily only in the agent's singular person, so that the fruits of effort would be forthwith missed if the labourer himself should disappear.

To establish justice in the world and furnish an adequate incentive to virtue was once thought the chief business of a future life. The Hebraic religions somewhat overreached themselves on these points: for the grotesque alternative between hell and heaven in the end only aggravated the injustice it was meant to remedy. Life is unjust in that it subordinates individuals to a general

mechanical law, and the deeper and longer hold fate has on the soul, the greater that injustice. A perpetual life would be a perpetual subjection to arbitrary power, while a last judgment would be but a last fatality. That hell may have frightened a few villains into omitting a crime is perhaps credible; but the embarrassed silence which the churches, in a more sensitive age, prefer to maintain on that wholesome doctrine—once, as they taught, the only rational basis for virtue—shows how their teaching has to follow the independent progress of morals. Nevertheless, persons are not wanting, apparently free from ecclesiastical constraint, who still maintain that the value of life depends on its indefinite prolongation. By an artifice of reflection they substitute vanity for reason, and selfish for ingenuous instincts in man. Being apparently interested in nothing but their own careers, they forget that a man may remember how little he counts in the world and suffer that rational knowledge to inspire his purposes. Intense morality has always envisaged earthly goods and evils, and even when a future life has been accepted vaguely, it has never given direction to human will or aims, which at best it could only proclaim more emphatically. It may indeed be said that no man of any depth of soul has made his prolonged existence the touchstone of his enthusiasms. Such an instinct is carnal, and if immortality is to add a higher inspiration to life it must not be an immortality of selfishness. What a despicable creature must a man be, and how sunk below the level of the most barbaric virtue, if he cannot bear to live and to die for his children, for his art, or for his country!

42

DISINTERESTED INTEREST IN LIFE

ANCIENT culture was rhetorical. It abounded in ideas that are verbally plausible and pass muster in a public speech, but that, if we stop to criticize them, prove at once to be inexcusably false. One of these rhetorical fallacies is the maxim that men cannot live for what they will not witness.

What does it matter to you, we may say in debate, what happened before you were born, or what may go on after you are buried ? And the orator who puts such a challenge may carry the audience with him, and raise a laugh at the expense of human sincerity. Yet the very men who applaud are proud of their ancestors, care for the future of their children, and are very much interested in securing, legally, the execution of their last will and testament. What may go on after their death concerns them deeply, not because they expect to watch the event from hell or heaven, but because they are interested ideally in what that event shall be, although they are never to witness it.

Lucretius, for instance, in his sympathy with nature, in his zeal for human enlightenment, in his tears for Iphigenia, long since dead, is not moved by the hope of observing, or the memory of having observed, what excites his emotion. He forgets himself. He sees the whole universe spread out in its true movement and proportions ; he sees mankind freed from the incubus of superstition, and from the havoc of passion. The vision kindles his enthusiasm, exalts his imagination, and swells his verse into unmistakable earnestness. If we follow Lucretius, therefore, in narrowing the sum of our personal fortunes to one brief and partial glimpse of earth, we must not suppose that we need narrow at all the sphere of our moral interests. On the contrary, just in proportion as we despise superstitious terrors and sentimental hopes, and as our imagination becomes self-forgetful, we shall strengthen the direct and primitive concern which we feel in the world and in what may go on there, before us, after us, or beyond our ken. If, like Lucretius and every philosophical poet, we range over all time and all existence, we shall forget our own persons, as he did, and even wish them to be forgotten if only the things we care for may subsist or arise. He who truly loves God, says Spinoza, cannot wish that God should love him in return. One who lives the life of the universe cannot be much concerned for his own. After all, the life of the universe is but the locus and extension of ours. The atoms that have once served to produce life remain fit to reproduce it ; and although the body they might animate later would be a new one, and would have a somewhat

different career, it would not, according to Lucretius, be of a totally new species; perhaps not more unlike ourselves than we are unlike one another, or than each of us is unlike himself at the various stages of his life.

The soul of nature, in the elements of it, is then, according to Lucretius, actually immortal; only the human individuality, the chance composition of those elements, is transitory; so that, if a man could care for what happens to other men, for what befell him when young or what may overtake him when old, he might perfectly well care, on the same imaginative principle, for what may go on in the world for ever. The finitude and injustice of his personal life would be broken down; the illusion of selfishness would be dissipated; and he might say to himself, I have imagination, and nothing that is real is alien to me.

Love, whether sexual, parental, or fraternal, is essentially sacrificial, and prompts a man to give his life for his friends. In thus losing his life gladly he in a sense finds it anew, since it has now become a part of his function and ideal to yield his place to others and to live afterwards only in them. While the primitive and animal side of him may continue to cling to existence at all hazards and to find the thought of extinction intolerable, his reason and finer imagination will build a new ideal on reality better understood, and be content that the future he looks to should be enjoyed by others. When we consider such a natural transformation and discipline of the will, when we catch even a slight glimpse of nature's resources and mysteries, how thin and verbal those belated hopes must seem which would elude death and abolish sacrifice! Such puerile dreams not only miss the whole pathos of human life, but ignore those specifically mortal virtues which might console us for not being so radiantly divine as we may at first have thought ourselves. Nature, in denying us perennial youth, has at least invited us to become unselfish and noble.

43

PLATONIC LOVE

PLATONIC love is the application to passion of that pursuit of something permanent in a world of change, of something absolute in a world of relativity, which was the essence of the Platonic philosophy. If we may give rein to the imagination in a matter which without imagination could not be understood at all, we may fancy Plato trying to comprehend the power which beauty exerted over his senses by applying to the objects of love that profound metaphysical distinction which he had learned to make in his dialectical studies — the distinction between the appearance to sense and the reality envisaged by the intellect, between the phenomenon and the ideal. The whole natural world had come to seem to him like a world of dreams. In dreams images succeed one another without other meaning than that which they derive from our strange power of recognition—a power which enables us somehow, among the most incongruous transformations and surroundings, to find again the objects of our waking life, and to name those absurd and unmannerly visions by the name of father or mother or by any other familiar name. As these resemblances to real things make up all the truth of our dream, and these recognitions all its meaning, so Plato thought that all the truth and meaning of earthly things was the reference they contained to a heavenly original. This heavenly original we remember and recognize even among the distortions, disappearances, and multiplications of its earthly copies.

This thought is easily applicable to the affections; indeed, it is not impossible that it was the natural transcendence of any deep glance into beauty, and the lessons in disillusion and idealism given by that natural metaphysician we call love, that first gave Plato the key to his general system. There is, at any rate, no sphere in which the supersensible is approached with so warm a feeling of its reality, in which the phenomenon is so transparent and so indifferent a symbol of something perfect and

divine beyond. In love and beauty, if anywhere, even the common man thinks he has visitations from a better world, approaches to a lost happiness ; a happiness never tasted by us in this world, and yet so natural, so expected, that we look for it at every turn of a corner, in every new face ; we look for it with so much confidence, with so much depth of expectation, that we never quite overcome our disappointment that it is not found.

And it is not found,—no, never,—in spite of what we may think when we are first in love. Plato knew this well from his experience. He had had successful loves, or what the world calls such, but he could not fancy that these successes were more than provocations, more than hints of what the true good is. To have mistaken them for real happiness would have been to continue to dream. It would have shown as little comprehension of the heart's experience as the idiot shows of the experience of the senses when he is unable to put together impressions of his eyes and hands and to say, " Here is a table ; here is a stool." It is by a parallel use of the understanding that we put together the impressions of the heart and the imagination and are able to say, " Here is absolute beauty : here is God." The impressions themselves have no permanence, no intelligible essence. As Plato said, they are never anything fixed but are always either becoming or ceasing to be what we think them. There must be, he tells us, an eternal and clearly definable object of which the visible appearances to us are the manifold semblance ; now by one trait now by another the phantom before us lights up that vague and haunting idea, and makes us utter its name with a momentary sense of certitude and attainment.

Just so the individual beauties that charm our attention and enchain the soul have only a transitive existence ; they are momentary visions, irrecoverable moods. Their object is unstable ; we never can say what it is, it changes so quickly before our eyes. What is it that a mother loves in her child ? Perhaps the babe not yet born, or the child that grew long ago by her suffering and unrecognized care ; perhaps the man to be or the youth that has been. What does a man love in a woman ? The girl that is yet, perhaps, to be his, or the wife that once

chose to give him her whole existence. Where, among all these glimpses, is the true object of love? It flies before us, it tempts us on, only to escape and turn to mock us from a new quarter. And yet nothing can concern us more or be more real to us than this mysterious good, since the pursuit of it gives our lives whatever they have of true earnestness and meaning, and the approach to it whatever they have of joy.

So far is this ideal, Plato would say, from being an illusion, that it is the source of the world, the power that keeps us in existence. But for it, we should be dead. A profound indifference, an initial torpor, would have kept us from ever opening our eyes, and we should have no world of business or pleasure, politics or science, to think about at all. We, and the whole universe, exist only by the passionate attempt to return to our perfection, by the radical need of losing ourselves again in God. That ineffable good is our natural possession; all we honour in this life is but the partial recovery of our birthright; every delightful thing is like a rift in the clouds through which we catch a glimpse of our native heaven. If that heaven seems so far away and the idea of it so dim and unreal, it is because we are so far from self-knowledge, so much immersed in what is alien and destructive to the soul.

44

IDEAL IMMORTALITY

The more we reflect, the more we live in memory and idea, the more convinced and penetrated we shall be by the experience of death; yet, as it is memory that enables us to feel that we are dying and to know that everything actual is in flux, so it is memory that opens to us an ideal immortality, unacceptable and meaningless to the old Adam, but genuine in its own way and undeniably true. Memory does not reprieve or postpone the changes which it registers, nor does it itself possess a permanent duration; it is, if possible, less stable and more mobile than primary sensation. It is, in point of existence, only an internal

and complex kind of sensibility. But in intent and by its significance it plunges to the depths of time ; it looks still on the departed and bears witness to the truth that, though absent from this part of experience, and incapable of returning to life, they nevertheless existed once in their own right, were as living and actual as experience is to-day, and still help to make up, in company with all past, present, and future mortals, the filling and value of the world.

As the pathos and heroism of life consists in accepting as an opportunity the fate that makes our own death, partial or total, serviceable to others, so the glory of life consists in accepting the knowledge of natural death as an opportunity to live in the spirit. The sacrifice, the self-surrender, remains real ; for, though the compensation is real, too, and at moments, perhaps, apparently overwhelming, it is always incomplete and leaves beneath an incurable sorrow. Yet reflection is a vital function ; memory and imagination have to the full the rhythm and force of life. These faculties, in envisaging the past or the ideal, envisage the eternal, and the man in whose mind they predominate is to that extent detached in his affections from the world of flux, from himself, and from his personal destiny. This detachment will not make him infinitely long-lived, nor absolutely happy, but it may render him intelligent and just, and may open to him all intellectual pleasures and all human sympathies.

Animal sensation is related to eternity only by the truth that it has taken place. The fact, fleeting as it is, is registered in ideal history, and no inventory of the world's riches, no true confession of its crimes, would ever be complete that ignored that incident. This indefeasible character in experience makes a first sort of ideal immortality, one on which those rational philosophers like to dwell who have not speculation enough to feel quite certain of any other. It was a consolation to the Epicurean to remember that, however brief and uncertain might be his tenure of delight, the past was safe and the present sure. " He lives happy," says Horace, " and master over himself, who can say daily, I have lived. To-morrow let Jove cover the sky with black clouds or flood it with sunshine ;

he shall not thereby render vain what lies behind, he shall not delete and make never to have existed what once the hour has brought in its flight." Such self-concentration and hugging of the facts has no power to improve them; it gives to pleasure and pain an impartial eternity, and rather tends to intrench in sensuous and selfish satisfactions a mind that has lost faith in reason and that deliberately ignores the difference in scope and dignity which exists among various pursuits. Yet the reflection is staunch and in its way heroic; it meets a vague and feeble aspiration, that looks to the infinite, with a just rebuke; it points to real satisfactions, experienced successes, and asks us to be content with the fulfilment of our own wills. If you have seen the world, if you have played your game and won it, what more would you ask for? If you have tasted the sweets of existence, you should be satisfied; if the experience has been bitter, you should be glad that it comes to an end.

Of course, as we have seen, there is a primary demand in man which death and mutation contradict flatly, so that no summons to cease can ever be obeyed with complete willingness. Even the suicide trembles and the ascetic feels the stings of the flesh. It is the part of philosophy, however, to pass over those natural repugnances and overlay them with as much countervailing rationality as can find lodgment in a particular mind. The Epicurean, having abandoned politics and religion and being afraid of any far-reaching ambition, applied philosophy honestly enough to what remained. Simple and healthy pleasures are the reward of simple and healthy pursuits; to chafe against them because they are limited is to import a foreign and disruptive element into the case; a healthy hunger has its limit, and its satisfaction reaches a natural term. Philosophy, far from alienating us from those values, should teach us to see their perfection and to maintain them in our ideal. In other words, the happy filling of a single hour is so much gained for the universe at large, and to find joy and sufficiency in the flying moment is perhaps the only means open to us for increasing the glory of eternity.

Moving events, while remaining enshrined in this fashion

in their permanent setting, may contain other and less external relations to the immutable. They may represent it. If the pleasures of sense are not cancelled when they cease, but continue to satisfy reason in that they once satisfied natural desires, much more will the pleasures of reflection retain their worth, when we consider that what they aspired to and reached was no momentary physical equilibrium but a permanent truth. As Archimedes, measuring the hypothenuse, was lost to events, being absorbed in a fact of much greater transcendence, so art and science interrupt the sense for change by engrossing attention in its issues and its laws. Old age often turns pious to look away from ruins to some world where youth endures and where what ought to have been is not overtaken by decay before it has quite come to maturity. Lost in such abstract contemplations, the mind is weaned from mortal concerns. It forgets for a few moments a world in which it has so little more to do and so much, perhaps, still to suffer. As a sensation of pure light would not distinguish itself from the light it revealed, so a contemplation of things not implicating time in their structure becomes, so far as its own deliverance goes, a timeless existence. Unconsciousness of temporal conditions and of the very flight of time makes the thinker sink for a moment into identity with timeless objects. And so immortality, in a second ideal sense, touches the mind.

The will, too, is an avenue to the eternal. What would you have? What is the goal of your endeavour? It must be some success, the establishment of some order, the expression of some experience. These points once reached, we are not left merely with the satisfaction of abstract success. Being natural goals, these ideals are related to natural functions. Their attainment does not exhaust but merely liberates, in this one instance, the function concerned, and so marks the perpetual point of reference common to that function in all its fluctuations. Every attainment of perfection in an art—as for instance in government—makes a return to perfection easier for posterity, since there remains an enlightening example, together with faculties predisposed by discipline to recover their ancient virtue. The better a man evokes and realizes

the ideal the more he leads the life that all others, in proportions to their worth, will seek to live after him, and the more he helps them to live in that nobler fashion. His presence in the society of immortals thus becomes, so to speak, more pervasive. He not only vanquishes time by his own rationality, living now in the eternal, but he continually lives again in all rational beings.

Since the ideal has this perpetual pertinence to mortal struggles, he who lives in the ideal and leaves it expressed in society or in art enjoys a double immortality. The eternal has absorbed him while he lived, and when he is dead his influence brings others to the same absorption, making them, through that ideal identity with the best in him, reincarnations and perennial seats of all in him which he could rationally hope to rescue from destruction. He can say, without any subterfuge or desire to delude himself, that he shall not wholly die; for he will have a better notion than the vulgar of what constitutes his being. By becoming the spectator and confessor of his own death and of universal mutation, he will have identified himself with what is spiritual in all spirits and masterful in all apprehension; and so conceiving himself, he may truly feel and know that he is eternal.

Nothing is eternal in its duration. The tide of evolution carries everything before it, thoughts no less than bodies, and persons no less than nations. Yet all things are eternal in their status, as truth is. The place which an event fills in history is its inalienable place; the character that an act or a feeling possesses in passing is its inalienable character. Now, the human mind is not merely animal, not merely absorbed in the felt transition from one state of life to another. It is partly synthetic, intellectual, contemplative, able to look before and after and to see fleeting things at once in their mutual relations, or, as Spinoza expressed it, under the form of eternity. To see things under the form of eternity is to see them in their historic and moral truth, not as they seemed as they passed, but as they remain when they are over. When a man's life is over, it remains true that he has lived; it remains true that he has been one sort of man, and not another. In the infinite mosaic of history that bit has its

unfading colour and its perpetual function and effect. A man who understands himself under the form of eternity knows the quality that eternally belongs to him, and knows that he cannot wholly die, even if he would ; for when the movement of his life is over, the truth of his life remains. The fact of him is a part for ever of the infinite context of facts. This sort of immortality belongs passively to everything ; but to the intellectual part of man it belongs actively also, because, in so far as it knows the eternity of truth, and is absorbed in it, the mind *lives* in that eternity. In caring only for the eternal, it has ceased to care for that part of itself which can die. But this sort of immortality is ideal only. He who, while he lives, lives in the eternal, does not live longer for that reason. Duration has merely dropped from his view ; he is not aware of or anxious about it ; and death, without losing its reality, has lost its sting. The sublimation of his interest rescues him, so far as it goes, from the mortality which he accepts and surveys. The animals are mortal without knowing it, and doubtless presume, in their folly, that they will live for ever. Man alone knows that he must die ; but that very knowledge raises him, in a sense, above mortality, by making him a sharer in the vision of eternal truth. He becomes the spectator of his own tragedy ; he sympathizes so much with the fury of the storm that he has not ears left for the shipwrecked sailor, though that sailor were his own soul. The truth is cruel, but it can be loved, and it makes free those who have loved it.

PART III

LITTLE ESSAYS ON ART AND POETRY

45

JUSTIFICATION OF ART

It is no longer the fashion among philosophers to decry art. Either its influence seems to them too slight to excite alarm, or their systems are too lax to subject anything to censure which has the least glamour or ideality about it. Tired, perhaps, of daily resolving the conflict between science and religion, they prefer to assume silently a harmony between morals and art. Moral harmonies, however, are not given ; they have to be made. The curse of superstition is that it justifies and protracts their absence by proclaiming their invisible presence. Of course a rational religion could not conflict with a rational science ; and similarly an art that was wholly admirable would necessarily play into the hand of progress. But as the real difficulty in the former case lies in saying what religion and what science would be truly rational, so here the problem is how far extant art is a benefit to mankind, and how far, perhaps, a vice or a burden.

That art is *prima facie* and in itself a good cannot be doubted. It is a spontaneous activity, and that settles the question. Yet the function of ethics is precisely to revise *prima facie* judgments of this kind and to fix the ultimate resultant of all given interests, in so far as they can be combined. In the actual disarray of human life and desire, wisdom consists in knowing what goods to sacrifice and what simples to pour into the supreme mixture. The extent to which æsthetic values are allowed to colour the resultant or highest good is a point of great theoretic importance, not only for art but for general philosophy. If art is excluded altogether or given only a trivial rôle, perhaps as a necessary relaxation, we feel at once that a

philosophy so judging human arts is ascetic or post-rational. It pretends to guide life from above and from without; it has discredited human nature and mortal interests, and has thereby undermined itself, since it is at best but a partial expression of that humanity which it strives to transcend. If, on the contrary, art is prized as something supreme and irresponsible, if the poetic and mystic glow which it may bring seems its own complete justification, then philosophy is evidently still pre-rational or, rather, non-existent; for the beasts that listened to Orpheus belong to this school.

To be bewitched is not to be saved, though all the magicians and æsthetes in the world should pronounce it to be so. Intoxication is a sad business, at least for a philosopher; for you must either drown yourself altogether, or else when sober again you will feel somewhat fooled by yesterday's joys and somewhat lost in to-day's vacancy. The man who would emancipate art from discipline and reason is trying to elude rationality, not merely in art, but in all existence. He is vexed at conditions of excellence that make him conscious of his own incompetence and failure. Rather than consider his function, he proclaims his self-sufficiency. A way foolishness has of revenging itself is to excommunicate the world.

If a practice can point to its innocence, if it can absolve itself from concern for a world with which it does not interfere, it has justified itself to those who love it, though it may not yet have recommended itself to those who do not. Now art, more than any other considerable pursuit, more even than speculation, is abstract and inconsequential. Born of suspended attention, it ends in itself. It encourages sensuous abstraction, and nothing concerns it less than to influence the world. Nor does it really do so in a notable degree. Social changes do not reach artistic expression until after their momentum is acquired and their other collateral effects are fully predetermined. Scarcely is a school of art established, giving expression to prevailing sentiment, when this sentiment changes and makes that style seem empty and ridiculous. The expression has little or no power to maintain the movement it registers, as a waterfall has little or no power to bring more

water down. Currents may indeed cut deep channels, but they cannot feed their own springs—at least not until the whole revolution of nature is taken into account.

In the individual, also, art registers passions without stimulating them; on the contrary, in stopping to depict them it steals away their life; and whatever interest and delight it transfers to their expression it subtracts from their vital energy. This appears unmistakably in erotic and in religious art. Though the artist's avowed purpose here be to arouse a practical impulse, he fails in so far as he is an artist in truth; for he then will seek to move the given passions only through beauty, but beauty is a rival object of passion in itself. Lascivious and pious works, when beauty has touched them, cease to give out what is wilful and disquieting in their subject and become altogether intellectual and sublime. There is a high breathlessness about beauty that cancels lust and superstition. The artist, in taking the latter for his theme, renders them innocent and interesting, because he looks at them from above, composes their attitudes and surroundings harmoniously, and makes them food for the mind. Accordingly it is only in a refined and secondary stage that active passions like to amuse themselves with their æsthetic expression. Unmitigated lustiness and raw fanaticism will snarl at pictures. Representations begin to interest when crude passions recede, and feel the need of conciliating liberal interests and adding some intellectual charm to their dumb attractions. Thus art, while by its subject it may betray the preoccupations among which it springs up, embodies a new and quite innocent interest.

This interest is more than innocent; it is liberal. Art has met, on the whole, with more success than science or morals. Beauty gives men the best hint of ultimate good which their experience as yet can offer; and the most lauded geniuses have been poets, as if people felt that those seers, rather than men of action or thought, had lived ideally and known what was worth knowing. That such should be the case, if the fact be admitted, would indeed prove the rudimentary state of human civilization. The truly comprehensive life should be the statesman's, for whom perception and theory might be expressed and

rewarded in action. The ideal dignity of art is therefore merely symbolic and vicarious. As some people study character in novels, and travel by reading tales of adventure, because real life is not yet so interesting to them as fiction, or because they find it cheaper to make their experiments in their dreams, so art in general is a rehearsal of rational living, and recasts in idea a world which we have no present means of recasting in reality. Yet this rehearsal reveals the glories of a possible performance better than do the miserable experiments until now executed on the reality.

When we consider the present distracted state of government and religion, there is much relief in turning from them to almost any art, where what is good is altogether and finally good, and what is bad is at least not treacherous. When we consider further the senseless rivalries, the vanities, the ignominy that reign in the " practical " world, how doubly blessed it becomes to find a sphere where limitation is an excellence, where diversity is a beauty, and where every man's ambition is consistent with every other man's and even favourable to it ! It is indeed so in art ; for we must not import into its blameless labours the bickerings and jealousies of criticism. Critics quarrel with other critics, and that is a part of philosophy. With an artist no sane man quarrels, any more than with the colour of a child's eyes. As nature, being full of seeds, rises into all sorts of crystallizations, each having its own ideal and potential life, each a nucleus of order and a habitation for the absolute self, so art, though in a medium poorer than pregnant matter, and incapable of intrinsic life, generates a semblance of all conceivable beings. What nature does with existence, art does with appearance ; and while the achievement leaves us, unhappily, much where we were before in all our efficacious relations, it entirely renews our vision and breeds a fresh world in fancy, where all form has the same inner justification that all life has in the real world. As no insect is without its rights and every cripple has his dream of happiness, so no artistic fact, no child of imagination, is without its small birthright of beauty. In this freer element, competition does not exist and everything is Olympian. Hungry generations do not tread

down the ideal but only its spokesmen or embodiments, that have cast in their lot with other material things. Art supplies constantly to contemplation what nature seldom affords in concrete experience—the union of life and peace.

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THE PLACE OF ART IN MORAL ECONOMY

How great a portion of human energies should be spent on art and its appreciation is a question to be answered variously by various persons and nations. There is no ideal *a priori*; an ideal can but express, if it is genuine, the balance of impulses and potentialities in a given soul. A mind at once sensuous and mobile will find its appropriate perfection in studying and reconstructing objects of sense. Its rationality will appear chiefly on the plane of perception, to render the circle of visions which makes up its life as delightful as possible. For such a man art will be the most satisfying, the most significant activity, and to load him with material riches or speculative truths or profound social loyalties will be to impede and depress him. The irrational is what does not justify itself in the end; and the born artist, repelled by the soberer and bitterer passions of the world, may justly call them irrational. They would not justify themselves in his experience; they make grievous demands and yield nothing in the end which is intelligible to him. His picture of them, if he be a dramatist, will hardly fail to be satirical; fate, frailty, illusion will be his constant themes. If his temperament could find political expression, he would minimise the machinery of life and deprecate any calculated prudence. He would trust the heart, enjoy nature, and not frown too angrily on inclination. Such a Bohemia he would regard as an ideal world in which humanity might flourish congenially.

A puritan moralist, before condemning such an infantile paradise, should remember that a commonwealth of butterflies actually exists. It is not any inherent wrongness in such an ideal that makes it unacceptable, but only the fact that human butterflies are not wholly mercurial

and that even imperfect geniuses are but an extreme type in a society whose guiding ideal is based upon a broader humanity than the artist represents. Men of science or business will accuse the poet of folly, on the very grounds on which he accuses them of the same. Each will seem to the other to be obeying a barren obsession. The statesman or philosopher who should aspire to adjust their quarrel could do so only by force of intelligent sympathy with both sides, and in view of the common conditions in which they find themselves. What ought to be done is that which, when done, will most nearly justify itself to all concerned. Practical problems of morals are judicial and political problems. Justice can never be pronounced without hearing the parties and weighing the interests at stake.

A circumstance that complicates such a calculation is this: æsthetic and other interests are not separable units, to be compared externally; they are rather strands interwoven in the texture of everything. Æsthetic sensibility colours every thought, qualifies every allegiance, and modifies every product of human labour. Consequently the love of beauty has to justify itself not merely intrinsically, or as a constituent part of life more or less to be insisted upon; it has to justify itself also as an influence. A hostile influence is the most odious of things. The enemy himself, the alien creature, lies in his own camp, and in a speculative moment we may put ourselves in his place and learn to think of him charitably; but his spirit in our own souls is like a private tempter, a treasonable voice weakening our allegiance to our own duty. A zealot might allow his neighbours to be damned in peace, did not a certain heretical odour emitted by them infect the sanctuary and disturb his own dogmatic calm. In the same way practical people might leave the artist alone in his oasis, and even grant him a pittance on which to live, as they feed the animals in a zoological garden, did he not intrude into their inmost conclave and vitiate the abstract cogency of their designs. It is not so much art in its own field that men of science look askance upon, as the love of glitter and rhetoric and false finality trespassing upon scientific ground; while men of affairs may well deprecate a rooted habit of sensuous absorption and of sudden transit to imaginary

worlds, a habit which must work havoc in their own sphere. In other words, there is an element of poetry inherent in thought, in conduct, in affection; and we must ask ourselves how far this ingredient is an obstacle to their proper development.

To criticize art on moral grounds is to pay it a high compliment by assuming that it aims to be adequate, and is addressed to a comprehensive mind. The only way in which art could disallow such criticism would be to protest its irresponsible infancy, and admit that it was a more or less amiable blatancy in individuals, and not *art* at all. Young animals often gambol in a delightful fashion, and men also may, though hardly when they intend to do so. Sportive self-expression can be prized because human nature contains a certain elasticity and margin for experiment, in which waste activity is inevitable and may be precious: for this license may lead, amid a thousand failures, to some real discovery and advance. Art, like life, should be free, since both are experimental. But it is one thing to make room for genius and to respect the sudden madness of poets through which, possibly, some god may speak, and it is quite another not to judge the result by rational standards. The bowels of the earth are full of all sorts of rumblings; which of the oracles drawn thence is true can be judged only by the light of day. If an artist's inspiration has been happy, it has been so because his work can sweeten or ennoble the mind and because its total effect will be beneficent. Art being a part of life, the criticism of art is a part of morals.

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RARENESS OF ÆSTHETIC FEELING

MEN are habitually insensible to beauty. Tomes of æsthetic criticism hang on a few moments of real delight and intuition. It is in rare and scattered instants that beauty smiles even on her adorers, who are reduced for habitual comfort to remembering her past favours. An æsthetic glow may pervade experience, but that circumstance is

seldom remarked; it figures only as an influence working subterraneously on thoughts and judgments which in themselves take a cognitive or practical direction. Only when the æsthetic ingredient becomes predominant do we exclaim, How beautiful! Ordinarily the pleasures which formal perception gives remain an undistinguished part of our comfort or curiosity.

Taste is formed in those moments when æsthetic emotion is massive and distinct; preferences then grown conscious, judgments then put into words, will reverberate through calmer hours; they will constitute prejudices, habits of apperception, secret standards for all other beauties. A period of life in which such intuitions have been frequent may amass tastes and ideals sufficient for the rest of our days. Youth in these matters governs maturity, and while men may develop their early impressions more systematically and find confirmations of them in various quarters, they will seldom look at the world afresh or use new categories in deciphering it. Half our standards come from our first masters, and the other half from our first loves. Never being so deeply stirred again, we remain persuaded that no objects save those we then discovered can have a true sublimity. These high-water marks of æsthetic life may easily be reached under tutelage. It may be some eloquent appreciations read in a book, or some preference expressed by a gifted friend, that may have revealed unsuspected beauties in art or nature; and then, since our own perception was vicarious and obviously inferior in volume to that which our mentor possessed, we shall take his judgments for our criterion, since they were the source and exemplar of all our own. Thus the volume and intensity of some appreciations, especially when nothing of the kind has preceded, makes them authoritative over our subsequent judgments. On those warm moments hang all our cold systematic opinions; and while the latter fill our days and shape our careers it is only the former that are crucial and alive.

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ART AND HAPPINESS

THE value of art lies in making people happy, first in practising the art and then in possessing its product. This observation might seem needless, and ought to be so; but if we compare it with what is commonly said on these subjects, we must confess that it may often be denied and more often, perhaps, may not be understood. Happiness is something men ought to pursue, although they seldom do so; they are drawn away from it at first by foolish impulses and afterwards by perverse laws. To secure happiness conduct would have to remain spontaneous while it learned not to be criminal; but the fanatical attachment of men, now to a fierce liberty, now to a false regimen, keeps them barbarous and wretched. A rational pursuit of happiness—which is one thing with progress or with the life of reason—would embody that natural piety which leaves to the episodes of life their inherent values, mourning death, celebrating love, sanctifying civic traditions, enjoying and correcting nature's ways. To discriminate happiness is therefore the very soul of art, which expresses experience without distorting it, as those political or metaphysical tyrannies distort it which sanctify unhappiness. A free mind, like a creative imagination, rejoices at the harmonies it can find or make between man and nature; and, where it finds none, it solves the conflict so far as it may and then notes and endures it with a shudder.

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UTILITY AND BEAUTY

THERE would be a kind of superstitious haste in the notion that what is convenient and economical is necessarily and by miracle beautiful. The uses and habits of one place and society require works which are or may easily become intrinsically beautiful; the uses and habits of another make these beautiful works impossible. The beauty has

a material and formal basis; no fitness of design will make a building of ten equal storeys as beautiful as a pavilion or a finely-proportioned tower; no utility will make a steamboat as beautiful as a sailing vessel. But the forms once established, with their various intrinsic characters, the fitness we know to exist in them will lend them some added charm, or their unfitness will disquiet us, and haunt us like a conscientious qualm. The other interests of our lives here mingle with the purely æsthetic, to enrich or to embitter it.

If Sybaris is so sad a name to the memory—and who is without some Sybaris of his own?—if the image of it is so tormenting and in the end so disgusting, this is not because we no longer think its marbles bright, its fountains cool, its athletes strong, or its roses fragrant; but because, mingled with all these supreme beauties, there is the ubiquitous shade of Nemesis, the sense of a vacant will and a suicidal inhumanity. The intolerableness of this moral condition poisons the beauty which continues to be felt. If this beauty did not exist, and was not still desired, the tragedy would disappear and Jehovah would be deprived of the worth of his victim. The sternness of moral forces lies precisely in this, that the sacrifices morality imposes upon us are real, that the things it renders impossible are still precious.

We are accustomed to think of prudence as estranging us only from low and ignoble things; we forget that utility and the need of system in our lives are a bar also to the free flights of the spirit. The highest instincts tend to disorganization as much as the lowest, since order or benefit is what practical morality everywhere insists upon, while sanctity and genius are as rebellious as vice. The constant demands of the heart and the belly can allow man only an incidental indulgence in the pleasures of the eye and the understanding. For this reason, utility keeps close watch over beauty, lest in her wilfulness and riot she should offend against our practical needs and ultimate happiness. And when the conscience is keen, that which emits a *sapor haereticus* becomes so initially horrible, that no beauty can ever be discovered in it; the senses and imagination are in that case inhibited by the conscience.

For this reason, the doctrine that beauty is essentially nothing but the expression of moral or practical good appeals to persons of predominant moral sensitiveness, not only because they wish it were the truth, but because it largely describes the experience of their own minds, somewhat warped in this particular. It will further be observed that the moralists are much more able to condemn than to appreciate the effects of the arts. Their taste is delicate without being keen, for the principle on which they judge is one which really operates to control and extend æsthetic effects; it is a source of expression and of certain *nuances* of satisfaction; but it is foreign to the stronger and more primitive æsthetic values to which the same persons are comparatively blind.

The extent to which æsthetic goods should be sacrificed is, of course, a moral question; for the function of practical reason is to compare, combine, and harmonize all our interests, with a view to attaining the greatest satisfactions of which our nature is capable. We must expect, therefore, that virtue should place the same restraint upon all our passions—not from superstitious aversion to any one need, but from an equal concern for them all. The consideration to be given to our æsthetic pleasures will depend upon their greater or less influence upon our happiness; and as this influence varies in different ages and countries, and with different individuals, it will be right to let æsthetic demands count for more or for less in the organization of life.

We may indeed, according to our personal sympathies, prefer one type of creature to another. We may love the martial, or the angelic, or the political temperament. We may delight to find in others that balance of susceptibilities and enthusiasms which we feel in our own breast. But no moral precept can require one species or individual to change its nature in order to resemble another, since such a requirement can have no power or authority over those on whom we would impose it. All that morality can require is the inward harmony of each life: and if we still abhor the thought of a possible being who should be happy without love, or knowledge, or beauty, the aversion we feel is not moral but instinctive, not rational but human.

What revolts us is not the want of excellence in that other creature, but his want of affinity to ourselves. Could we survey the whole universe, we might indeed assign to each species a moral dignity proportionate to its general beneficence and inward wealth ; but such an absolute standard, if it exists, is incommunicable to us ; and we are reduced to judging of the excellence of every nature by its relation to the human.

If things of moment are before us, we cannot stop to play with symbols and figures of speech. Too much eloquence in a diplomatic document, or in a familiar letter, or in a prayer, is an offence not only against practical sense, but also against taste. The occasion has tuned us to a certain key of sentiment, and deprived us of the power to respond to other stimuli. We cannot attend to them with pleasure, and therefore they lose the beauty they might elsewhere have had. They are offensive, not in themselves —for nothing is intrinsically ugly—but by virtue of our present demand for something different. A prison as gay as a bazaar, a church as dumb as a prison, offend by their failure to support by their æsthetic quality the moral emotion with which we approach them. The arts must study their occasions ; they must stand modestly aside until they can slip in fitly into the interstices of life. This is the consequence of the superficial stratum on which they flourish ; their roots, as we have seen, are not deep in the world, and they appear only as unstable, superadded activities, employments of our freedom, after the work of life is done and the terror of it is allayed. They must, therefore, fit their forms, like parasites, to the stouter growths to which they cling.

Herein lies the greatest difficulty and nicety of art. It must not only create things abstractly beautiful, but it must conciliate all the competitors these may have to the attention of the world, and must know how to insinuate their charms among the objects of our passion. But this subserviency and enforced humility of beauty is not without its virtue and reward. If the æsthetic habit lie under the necessity of respecting and observing our passions, it possesses the privilege of soothing our griefs. There is no situation so terrible that it may not be relieved by the

momentary pause of the mind to contemplate it æsthetically.

Grief itself becomes in this way not wholly pain; a sweetness is added to it by our reflection. The saddest scenes may lose their bitterness in their beauty. This ministration makes, as it were, the piety of the Muses, who succour their mother, Life, and repay her for their nurture by the comfort of their continual presence. The æsthetic world is limited in its scope; it must submit to the control of the organizing reason, and not trespass upon more useful and holy ground. The garden must not encroach upon the corn-fields; but the eye of the gardener may transform the corn-fields themselves by dint of loving observation into a garden of a soberer kind. By finding grandeur in our disasters, and merriment in our mishaps, the æsthetic sense thus mollifies both, and consoles us for the frequent impossibility of a serious and perfect beauty.

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GLIMPSES OF PERFECTION

Nothing but the good of life enters into the texture of the beautiful. What charms us in the comic, what stirs us in the sublime and touches us in the pathetic, is a glimpse of some good; imperfection has value only as an incipient perfection. Could the labours and sufferings of life be reduced, and a better harmony between man and nature be established, nothing would be lost to the arts; for the pure and ultimate value of the comic is discovery; of the pathetic, love; of the sublime, exaltation; and these would still subsist. Indeed, they would all be increased; and it has ever been, accordingly, in the happiest and most prosperous moments of humanity, when the mind and the world were knit into a brief embrace, that natural beauty has been best perceived and art has won its triumphs. But it sometimes happens, in moments less propitious, that the soul is subdued to what it works in, and loses its power of idealization and hope. By a pathetic and superstitious

self-depreciation, we then punish ourselves for the imperfection of nature. Awed by the magnitude of a reality that we can no longer conceive as free from evil, we try to assert that its evil also is a good; and we poison the very essence of the good to make its extension universal. We confuse the causal connexion of those things in nature which we call good or evil by an adventitious denomination, with the logical opposition between good and evil themselves; because one generation makes room for another, we say death is necessary to life; and because the causes of sorrow and joy are so mingled in this world, we cannot conceive how, in a better world, they might be disentangled.

This incapacity of the imagination to reconstruct the conditions of life and build the frame of things nearer to the heart's desire is fatal to a steady loyalty to what is noble and fine. We surrender ourselves to a kind of miscellaneous appreciation, without standard or goal; and calling every vexatious apparition by the name of beauty, we become incapable of discriminating its excellence or feeling its value. We need to clarify our ideals, and enliven our vision of perfection. No atheism is so terrible as the absence of an ultimate ideal, nor could any failure of power be more contrary to human nature than the failure of moral imagination, or more incompatible with healthy life. For we have faculties, and habits, and impulses. These are the basis of our demands. And these demands, although variable, constitute an ever-present intrinsic standard of value by which we feel and judge. The ideal is immanent in them; for the ideal means that fulfilment in which our faculties would find their freest employment and their most congenial world. Perfection would be nothing but life under those conditions. Accordingly our consciousness of the ideal becomes distinct in proportion as we advance in virtue and in proportion to the vigour and definiteness with which our faculties work. When the vital harmony is complete, when the *act* is *pure*, faith in perfection passes into vision. That man is unhappy indeed, who in all his life has had no glimpse of perfection, who in the ecstasy of love, or in the delight of contemplation, has never been able to say: It is attained. Such moments of inspiration are

the source of the arts, which have no higher function than to renew them.

A work of art is indeed a monument to such a moment, the memorial to such a vision ; and its charm varies with its power of recalling us from the distractions of common life to the joy of a more natural and perfect activity.

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MERE ART

MERE sensation or mere emotion is an indignity to a mature human being. When we eat, we demand a pleasant vista, flowers, or conversation, and failing these we take refuge in a newspaper. The monks, knowing that men should not feed silently like stalled oxen, appointed some one to read aloud in the refectory ; and the Fathers, obeying the same civilized instinct, had contrived in their theology intelligible points of attachment for religious emotion. A refined mind finds as little happiness in love without friendship as in sensuality without love ; it may succumb to both, but it accepts neither. What is true of mere sensibility is no less true of mere fancy. Any absolute work of art which serves no further purpose than to stimulate an emotion has about it a certain luxurious and visionary taint. We leave it with a blank mind, and a pang bubbles up from the very fountain of pleasures. Art, so long as it needs to be a dream, will never cease to prove a disappointment. Its facile cruelty, its narcotic abstraction, can never sweeten the evils we return to at home ; it can liberate half the mind only by leaving the other half in abeyance.

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COSTLINESS

THERE is no reason why cost, or the circumstances which are its basis, should not, like other practical values, heighten the tone of consciousness, and add to the pleasure

with which we view an object. In fact, such is our daily experience ; for great as is the sensuous beauty of gems, their rarity and price add an expression of distinction to them, which they would never have if they were cheap.

The knowledge of cost, when expressed in terms of money, is incapable of contributing to æsthetic effect, but the reason is not so much that the suggested value is not æsthetic, as that no real value is suggested at all. If we reinterpret our price, however, and translate it back into the facts which constitute it, into the materials employed, their original place and quality, and the labour and art which transformed them into the present thing, then we add to the æsthetic value of the object by the expression which we find in it, not of its price in money, but of its human cost. We have now the consciousness of the human values which it represents, and these values, sympathetically present to the fancy, increase our present interest and admiration. We feel a natural wonder in what is rare and affects us with unusual sensations. What comes from a far country carries our thoughts there, and gains by the wealth and picturesqueness of its associations. And that on which human labour has been spent, especially if it was a labour of love, and is apparent in the product, has one of the deepest possible claims to admiration. So that the standard of cost, the most vulgar of all standards, is such only when it remains empty and abstract. Let the thoughts wander back and consider the elements of value, and our appreciation, from being verbal and commercial, becomes poetic and real. Our sense of what lies behind any object, unlovely though that background may be, gives interest and poignancy to that which is present ; our attention and wonder are engaged, and a new meaning and importance is added to such intrinsic beauty as the object may possess.

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THE STARS

To most people, I fancy, the stars are beautiful ; but if you asked why, they would be at a loss to reply, until they

remembered what they had heard about astronomy, and the great size and distance and possible habitation of those orbs. The vague and illusive ideas thus aroused fall in so well with the dumb emotion we were already feeling, that we attribute this emotion to those ideas, and persuade ourselves that the power of the starry heavens lies in the suggestion of astronomical facts.

The idea of the insignificance of our earth and of the incomprehensible multiplicity of worlds is indeed immensely impressive ; it may even be intensely disagreeable. There is something baffling about infinity ; in its presence the sense of finite humility can never wholly banish the rebellious suspicion that we are being deluded. Our mathematical imagination is put on the rack by an attempted conception that has all the anguish of a nightmare and probably, could we but awake, all its laughable absurdity. But the obsession of this dream is an intellectual puzzle, not an æsthetic delight. Before the days of Kepler the heavens declared the glory of the Lord ; and we needed no calculation of stellar distances, no fancies about a plurality of worlds, no image of infinite spaces, to make the stars sublime.

Had we been taught to believe that the stars governed our fortunes, and were we reminded of fate whenever we looked at them, we should similarly tend to imagine that this belief was the source of their sublimity ; and if the superstition were dispelled, we should think the interest gone from the apparition. But experience would soon undeceive us, and prove that the sensuous character of the object was sublime in itself. For that reason the parable of the natal stars governing our lives is such a natural one to express our subjection to circumstances, and can be transformed by the stupidity of disciples into a literal tenet. In the same way, the kinship of the emotion produced by the stars with the emotion proper to certain religious moments makes the stars seem a religious object. They become, like impressive music, a stimulus to worship. But fortunately there are experiences which remain untouched by theory, and which maintain the mutual intelligence of men through the estrangements wrought by intellectual and religious systems. When the super-

structures crumble, the common foundation of human sentience and imagination is exposed beneath. Did not the infinite, by this initial assault upon our senses, awe us and overwhelm us, as solemn music might, the idea of it would be abstract and mental like that of the infinitesimal, and nothing but an amusing curiosity. The knowledge that the universe is a multitude of minute spheres circling, like specks of dust, in a dark and boundless void, might leave us cold and indifferent, if not bored and depressed, were it not that we identify this hypothetical scheme with the visible splendour, the poignant intensity, and the baffling number of the stars. So far is the object from giving value to the impression, that it is here, as it must always ultimately be, the impression that gives value to the object. For all worth leads us back to actual feeling somewhere, or else evaporates into nothing—into a word and a superstition.

Now, the starry heavens are very happily designed to intensify the sensations on which their fascination must rest. The continuum of space is broken into points, numerous enough to give the utmost idea of multiplicity, and yet so distinct and vivid that it is impossible not to remain aware of their individuality. The sensuous contrast of the dark background—blacker the clearer the night and the more stars we can see—with the palpitating fire of the stars themselves, could not be exceeded by any possible device.

Fancy a map of the heavens and every star plotted upon it, even those invisible to the naked eye: why would this object, as full of scientific suggestion surely as the reality, leave us so comparatively cold? The sense of multiplicity is naturally in no way diminished by the representation; but the poignancy of the sensation, the life of the light, are gone; and with the dulled impression the keenness of the emotion disappears. Or imagine the stars, undiminished in number, without losing any of their astronomical significance and divine immutability, marshalled in geometrical patterns; say in a Latin cross, with the words *In hoc signo vinces* in a scroll around them. The beauty of the illumination would be perhaps increased, and its import, practical, religious, and cosmic, would

surely be a little plainer ; but where would be the sublimity of the spectacle ? Irretrievably lost : and lost because the form of the object would no longer tantalize us with its sheer multiplicity, and with the consequent overpowering sense of suspense and awe. Accordingly things which have enough multiplicity, as the lights of a city seen across water, have an effect similar to that of the stars, if less intense ; whereas a star, if alone, because the multiplicity is lacking, makes a wholly different impression. The single star is tender, beautiful, and mild ; we can compare it to the humblest and sweetest of things :

> A violet by a mossy stone
> Half hidden from the eye,
> Fair as *a star when only one*
> *Is shining in the sky.*

It is, not only in fact but in nature, an attendant on the moon, associated with the moon, if we may be so prosaic here, not only by contiguity but also by similarity.

> Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-regioned star
> Or vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky.

The same poet can say elsewhere of a passionate lover :

> He arose
> Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star,
> Amid the sapphire heaven's deep repose.

How opposite is all this from the cold glitter, the cruel and mysterious sublimity of the stars when they are many ! With these we have no tender associations ; they make us think rather of Kant who could hit on nothing else to compare with his categorical imperative, perhaps because he found in both the same baffling incomprehensibility and the same fierce actuality. Such ultimate feelings are sensations of physical tension.

54

MUSIC

THERE is in sounds such an exquisite and continuous gradation in pitch, and such a measurable relation in

length, that an object almost as complex and describable as a visible one can be built out of them. Not that a musical composition exists in any mystical way, as a portion of the music of the spheres, which no one is hearing; but that, for a critical philosophy, visible objects are also nothing but possibilities of sensation. To the inner man, a real world is merely the shadow of that assurance of eventual experience which accompanies sanity. This ideal objectivity can accrue to any mental figment that has enough cohesion, substance, and individuality to be describable and recognizable, and these qualities belong no less to audible than to spatial ideas.

There is, accordingly, some justification in Schopenhauer's speculative assertion that music repeats the entire world of sense, and is a parallel method of expression of the underlying substance or will. The world of sound is certainly capable of infinite variety and, were our sense developed, of infinite extensions, and it has as much as the world of matter the power to interest us and to stir our emotions. It was therefore potentially as full of meaning. But it has proved the less applicable and constant apparition; and, therefore, music, which builds with its materials, while the purest and most impressive of the arts, is the least human and instructive of them.

Music is essentially useless, as life is: but both lend utility to their conditions. That the way in which idle sounds run together should matter so much is a mystery of the same order as the spirit's concern to keep a particular body alive, or to propagate its life. Such an interest is, from an absolute point of view, wholly gratuitous; and so long as the natural basis and expressive function of spirit are not perceived, this mystery is baffling. In truth the order of values inverts that of causes; and experience, in which all values lie, is an ideal resultant, itself ineffectual, of the potencies it can conceive. Delight in music is liberal; it makes useful the organs and processes that subserve it. We happen to breathe, and on that account are interested in breathing; and it is no greater marvel that, happening to be subject to intricate musical sensations, we should be in earnest about these too. The human ear discriminates sounds with ease; what it hears

is so diversified that its elements can be massed without being confused, or can form a sequence having a character of its own, to be appreciated and remembered. The eye too has a field in which clear distinctions and relations appear, and for that reason is an organ favourable to intelligence; but what gives music its superior emotional power is its rhythmic advance. Time is a medium which appeals more than space to emotion. Since life is itself a flux, and thought an operation, there is naturally something immediate and breathless about whatever flows and expands. The visible world offers itself to our regard with a certain lazy indifference. "Peruse me," it seems to say, "if you will. I am here; and even if you pass me by now and later find it to your advantage to resurvey me, I may still be here." The world of sound speaks a more urgent language. It insinuates itself into our very substance, and it is not so much the music that moves us as we that move with it. Its rhythms seize upon our bodily life, to accelerate or to deepen it; and we must either become inattentive altogether or remain enslaved.

This imperious function in music has lent it functions which are far from æsthetic. Song can be used to keep in unison many men's efforts, as when sailors sing as they heave; it can make persuasive and obvious sentiments which, if not set to music, might seem absurd, as often in love songs and in psalmody. It may indeed serve to prepare the mind for any impression whatever, and render the same more intense when it comes. Music was long used before it was loved or people took pains to refine it. It would have seemed as strange in primitive times to turn utterance into a fine art as now to make æsthetic paces out of mourning or child-birth. Primitive music is indeed a wail and a parturition; magical and suggestive as it may be, for long ages it never bethinks itself to be beautiful. It is content to furnish a contagious melancholy employment to souls without a language and with little interest in the real world. Barbaric musicians, singing and playing together more or less at random, are too much carried away by their performance to conceive its effect; they cry far too loud and too unceasingly to listen. A contagious tradition carries them along and controls them, in a way,

as they improvise; the assembly is hardly an audience; all are performers, and the crowd is only a stimulus that keeps every one dancing and howling in emulation. This unconsidered flow of early art remains present, more or less, to the end. Instead of vague custom we have schools, and instead of swaying multitudes academic example; but many a discord and mannerism survive simply because the musician is so suggestible, or so lost in the tumult of production, as never to reconsider what he does, or to perceive its wastefulness.

Nevertheless an inherent value exists in all emitted sounds, although barbaric practice and theory are slow to recognize it. Each tone has its quality, like jewels of different water; every cadence has its vital expression, no less inherent in it than that which comes in a posture or in a thought. Everything audible thrills merely by sounding, and though this perceptual thrill be at first overpowered by the effort and excitement of action, yet it eventually fights its way to the top. Participation in music may become perfunctory or dull for the great majority, as when hymns are sung in church; a mere suggestion of action will doubtless continue to colour the impression received, for a tendency to act is involved in perception; but this suggestion will be only an over-tone or echo behind an auditory feeling. Some performers will be singled out from the crowd; those whom the public likes to hear will be asked to continue alone; and soon a certain suasion will be exerted over them by the approval or censure of others, so that consciously or unconsciously they will train themselves to please.

Popular music needs to be simple, although elaborate music may be beautiful to the few. When elaborate music is the fashion among people to whom all music is a voluptuous mystery, we may be sure that what they love is voluptuousness or fashion, and not music itself. Beneath its hypnotic power, music, for the musician, has an intellectual essence. Out of simple chords and melodies, which at first catch only the ear, he weaves elaborate compositions that by their form appeal also to the mind. This side of music resembles a richer versification; it may be compared also to mathematics or to arabesques. A

moving arabesque that has a vital dimension, an audible mathematics, adding sense to form, and a versification that, since it has no subject-matter, cannot do violence to it by its complex artifices—these are types of pure living, altogether joyful and delightful things. They combine life with order, precision with spontaneity; the flux in them has become rhythmical and its freedom has passed into a rational choice, since it has come in sight of the eternal form it would embody. The musician, like an architect or goldsmith working in sound, but freer than they from material trammels, can expand for ever his yielding labyrinth; every step opens up new vistas, every decision—how unlike those made in real life!—multiplies opportunities, and widens the horizon before him, without preventing him from going back at will to begin afresh at any point, to trace the other possible paths leading thence through various magic landscapes. Pure music is pure art. Its extreme abstraction is balanced by its entire spontaneity, and, while it has no external significance, it bears no internal curse. It is something to which a few spirits may well surrender themselves, sure that in a liberal commonwealth they will be thanked for their ideal labour, the fruits of which many may enjoy. Such excursions into ultra-mundane regions, where order is free, refine the mind and make it familiar with perfection. By analogy an ideal form comes to be conceived and desiderated in other regions, where it is not produced so readily, and the music heard, as the Pythagoreans hoped, makes the soul also musical.

It must be confessed, however, that a world of sounds and rhythms, all about nothing, is a by-world and a mere distraction for a political animal. Its substance is air, though the spell of it may have moral affinities. Nevertheless this ethereal art may be enticed to earth and married with what is mortal. Music interests humanity most when it is wedded to human events. The alliance comes about through the emotions which music and life arouse in common. For sound, in sweeping through the body and making felt there its kinetic and potential stress, provokes no less interest than does any other physical event or premonition. Music can produce emotion as

directly as can fighting or love. Nor is music the only idle cerebral commotion that enlists attention and presents issues no less momentous for being quite imaginary; dreams do the same, and seldom can the real crises of life so absorb the soul, or prompt it to such extreme efforts, as can delirium in sickness, or delusion in what passes for health.

There is perhaps no emotion incident to human life that music cannot render in its abstract medium by suggesting the pang of it; though of course music cannot describe the complex situation which lends earthly passions their specific colour. The passions, as music renders them, are always general. But music has its own substitute for distinct representation. It makes feeling specific, nay, more delicate and precise than association with things could make it, by uniting it with musical form. We may say that besides suggesting abstractly all ordinary passions, music creates a new realm of form far more subtly impassioned than is vulgar experience. Human life is confined to a dramatic repertory which has already become somewhat classical and worn, but music has no end of new situations, shaded in infinite ways; it moves in all sorts of bodies to all sorts of adventures. In life the ordinary routine of destiny beats so emphatic a measure that it does not allow free play to feeling; we cannot linger on anything long enough to exhaust its meaning, nor can we wander far from the beaten path to catch new impressions. But in music there are no mortal obligations, no imperious needs calling us back to reality. Here nothing beautiful is extravagant, nothing delightful unworthy. Musical refinement finds no limit but its own instinct, so that a thousand shades of what, in our blundering words, we must call sadness or mirth, find in music their distinct expression. Each phrase, each composition, articulates perfectly what no human situation could embody. These fine emotions are really new; they are altogether musical and unexampled in practical life; they are native to the passing cadence, absolute postures into which it throws the soul.

Thus music is a means of giving form to our inner feelings without attaching them to events or objects in the world. Music is articulate, but articulate in a

language which avoids, or at least veils, the articulation of the world we live in; it is, therefore, the chosen art of a mind to whom the world is still foreign. If this seems in one way an incapacity, it is also a privilege. Not to be at home in the world, to prize it chiefly for echoes which it may have in the soul, to have a soul that can give forth echoes, or that can generate internal dramas of sound out of its own resources—may this not be a more enviable endowment than that of a mind all surface, a sensitive plate only able to photograph this not too beautiful earth? Music serves to keep alive the conviction, which a confused experience might obscure, that perfection is essentially possible; it reminds us that there are worlds far removed from the actual which are yet living and very near to the heart.

Emotion is initially about nothing and much of it remains about nothing to the end. What rescues a part of our passions from this pathological plight and lends them some other function than merely to be, is the ideal relevance which they sometimes acquire. All experience is pathological if we consider its ground, but a part of it is also rational if we consider its import. The art of distributing interest among the occasions and vistas of life so as to lend them a constant worth, and at the same time to give feeling an intelligible object, is at bottom the sole business of education; but the undertaking is long, and much feeling remains unemployed and unjustified. This objectless emotion chokes the heart with its dull importunity; now it impedes right action, now it feeds and fattens illusion. Much of it radiates from primary functions which, though their operation is half known, have only base or pitiful associations in human life; so that they trouble us with deep and subtle cravings, the unclaimed *Hinterland* of life. When music, either by verbal indications or by sensuous affinities, or by both at once, succeeds in tapping this fund of suppressed feeling, it accordingly supplies a great need. It makes the dumb speak, and plucks from the animal heart potentialities of expression which might render it, perhaps, even more than human.

By its emotional range music is appropriate to all

intense occasions: we dance, pray, and mourn to music, and the more inadequate words or external acts are to the situation, the more grateful music is. As the only bond between music and life is emotion, music is out of place only where emotion itself is absent. If it breaks in upon us in the midst of study or business it becomes an interruption or alternative to our activity, rather than an expression of it; we must either remain inattentive or pass altogether into the realm of sound (which may be unemotional enough) and become musicians for the nonce. Music brings its sympathetic ministry only to emotional moments. There is often in what moves us a certain ruthless persistence, together with a certain poverty of form; the power felt is out of proportion to the interest awakened, and attention is kept, as in pain, at once strained and idle. At such a moment music is a blessed resource. Without attempting to remove a mood that is perhaps inevitable, it gives it a congruous filling. Thus the mood is justified by an illustration or expression which seems to offer some objective and ideal ground for its existence; and the mood is at the same time relieved by absorption in that impersonal object. So entertained, the feeling settles. The passion to which at first we succumbed is now tamed and appropriated. We have digested the foreign substance in giving it a rational form; its energies are merged in that strength by which we freely operate.

In this way the most abstract of arts serves the dumbest emotions. Music is like those branches which some trees put forth close to the ground, far below the point where the other boughs separate; almost a tree by itself, it has nothing but the root in common with its parent. Somewhat in this fashion music diverts into an abstract sphere a part of those forces which abound beneath the point at which human understanding grows articulate. It flourishes on saps which other branches of ideation are too narrow or rigid to take up. Those elementary substances the musician can spiritualize by his special methods, taking away their reproach and redeeming them from blind intensity.

There is consequently in music a sort of Christian

piety, in that it comes not to call the just but sinners to repentance, and understands the spiritual possibilities in outcasts from the respectable world. If we look at things absolutely enough, and from their own point of view, there can be no doubt that each has its own ideal and does not question its own justification. Lust and frenzy, reverie or despair, fatal as they may be to a creature that has ulterior interests, are not perverse in themselves: each searches for its own affinities, and has a kind of inertia which tends to maintain it in being, and to attach or draw in whatever is propitious to it. Feelings are as blameless as so many forms of vegetation; they can be poisonous only to a different life. They are all primordial motions, eddies which the universal flux makes for no reason, since its habit of falling into such attitudes is the ground-work and exemplar for nature and logic alike. That such strains should exist is an ultimate datum; justification cannot be required of them, but must be offered to each of them in turn by all that enters its particular orbit. There is no will but might find a world to disport itself in and to call good, and thereupon boast that it had created the order in which it found itself expressed. But such satisfaction has been denied to the majority; the equilibrium of things has at least postponed their day. Yet they are not altogether extinguished. Many ill-suppressed possibilities endure in matter, and peep into being through the crevices, as it were, of the dominant world. Weeds they are called by the tyrant, but in themselves they are aware of being potential gods. Why should not every impulse expand in a congenial paradise? Why should each, made evil now only by an adventitious appellation or a contrary fate, not vindicate its own ideal? If there is a piety towards things deformed, because it is not they that are perverse, but the world that by its laws and arbitrary standards decides to treat them as if they were, how much more should there be a piety towards things altogether lovely, when it is only space and matter that are wanting for their perfect realization?

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THE ESSENCE OF LITERATURE

To turn events into ideas is the function of literature. Music, which in a certain sense is a mass of pure forms, must leave its " ideas " imbedded in their own medium—they are musical ideas—and cannot impose them on any foreign material, such as human affairs. Science, on the contrary, seeks to disclose the bleak anatomy of existence, stripping off as much as possible the veil of prejudice and words. Literature takes a middle course and tries to subdue music, which for its purposes would be futile and too abstract, into conformity with general experience, making music thereby significant. Literary art in the end rejects all unmeaning flourishes, all complications that have no counterpart in the things of this world or no use in expressing their relations ; at the same time it aspires to digest that reality to which it confines itself, making it over into ideal substance and material for the mind. It looks at natural things with an incorrigibly dramatic eye, turning them into permanent unities (which they never are) and almost into persons, grouping them by their imaginative or moral affinities and retaining in them chiefly what is incidental to their being, namely, the part they may chance to play in man's adventures.

Such literary art demands a subject-matter other than the literary impulse itself. The literary man is an interpreter and hardly succeeds, as the musician may, without experience and mastery of human affairs. His art is half genius and half fidelity. He needs inspiration ; he must wait for automatic musical tendencies to ferment in his mind, proving it to be fertile in devices, comparisons, and bold assimilations. Yet inspiration alone will lead him astray, for his art is relative to something other than its own formal impulse ; it comes to clarify the real world, not to encumber it ; and it needs to render its native agility pertinent to the facts and to attach its volume of feeling to what is momentous in human life. Literature has its piety, its conscience ; it cannot long forget, without

forfeiting all dignity, that it serves a burdened and perplexed creature, a human animal struggling to persuade the universal Sphinx to propose a more intelligible riddle. Irresponsible and trivial in its abstract impulse, man's simian chatter becomes noble as it becomes symbolic; its representative function lends it a serious beauty, its utility endows it with moral worth.

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THE NEED OF POETRY

WHY do our practical men make room for religion in the background of their world? Why did Plato, after banishing the poets, poetize the universe in his prose? Because the abstraction by which the world of science and of practice is drawn out of our experience, is too violent to satisfy even the thoughtless and vulgar; the ideality of our views of nature, the conventionality of the drama we call the world, are too glaring not to be somehow perceived by all. Each must sometimes fall back upon the soul; he must challenge this apparition with the thought of death; he must ask himself for the mainspring and value of his life. He will then remember his stifled loves; he will feel that only his illusions have ever given him a sense of reality, only his passions the hope and the vision of peace. He will read himself through and almost gather a meaning from his experience; at least he will half believe that all he has been dealing with was a dream and a symbol, and raise his eyes toward the truth beyond.

This plastic moment of the mind, when we become aware of the artificiality and inadequacy of what common sense conceives, is the true moment of poetic opportunity, —an opportunity, we may hasten to confess, which is generally missed. The strain of attention, the concentration and focussing of thought on the unfamiliar immediacy of things, usually brings about nothing but confusion. We are dazed, we are filled with a sense of unutterable things, luminous yet indistinguishable, many yet one. Instead of rising to imagination, we sink into mysticism.

To accomplish a mystical disintegration is not the function of any art; if any art seems to accomplish it, the effect is only incidental, being involved, perhaps, in the process of constructing the proper object of that art, as we might cut down trees and dig them up by the roots to lay the foundations of a temple. For every art looks to the building up of something. And just because the image of the world built up by common sense and natural science is an inadequate image (a skeleton which needs the filling of sensation before it can live), therefore the moment when we realize its inadequacy is the moment when the higher arts find their opportunity. When the world is shattered to bits they can come and "build it nearer to the heart's desire."

The great function of poetry is precisely this: to repair to the material of experience, seizing hold of the reality of sensation and fancy beneath the surface of conventional ideas, and then out of that living but indefinite material to build new structures, richer, finer, fitter to the primary tendencies of our nature, truer to the ultimate possibilities of the soul. Our descent into the elements of our being is then justified by our subsequent freer ascent toward its goal; we revert to sense only to find food for reason; we destroy conventions only to construct ideals.

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POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

Are poets at heart in search of a philosophy? Or is philosophy in the end nothing but poetry? Let us consider the situation.

The reasonings and investigations of philosophy are arduous, and if poetry is to be linked with them, it can be artificially only, and with a bad grace. But the vision of philosophy is sublime. The order it reveals in the world is something beautiful, tragic, sympathetic to the mind, and just what every poet, on a small or on a large scale, is always trying to catch.

In philosophy itself investigation and reasoning are

only preparatory and servile parts, means to an end. They terminate in insight, or what in the noblest sense of the word may be called *theory*, *θεωρία*,—a steady contemplation of all things in their order and worth. Such contemplation is imaginative. No one can reach it who has not enlarged his mind and tamed his heart. A philosopher who attains it is, for the moment, a poet; and a poet who turns his practised and passionate imagination on the order of all things, or on anything in the light of the whole, is for that moment a philosopher.

Nevertheless, even if we grant that the philosopher, in his best moments, is a poet, we may suspect that the poet has his worst moments when he tries to be a philosopher, or rather, when he succeeds in being one. Philosophy is something reasoned and heavy; poetry something winged, flashing, inspired. Take almost any longish poem, and the parts of it are better than the whole. A poet is able to put together a few words, a cadence or two, a single interesting image. He renders in that way some moment of comparatively high tension, of comparatively keen sentiment. But at the next moment the tension is relaxed, the sentiment has faded, and what succeeds is usually incongruous with what went before, or at least inferior. The thought drifts away from what it had started to be. It is lost in the sands of versification. As man is now constituted, to be brief is almost a condition of being inspired.

Shall we say, then,—and I now broach an idea by which I set some store,—that poetry is essentially short-winded, that what is poetic is necessarily intermittent in the writings of poets, that only the fleeting moment, the mood, the episode, can be rapturously felt, or rapturously rendered, while life as a whole, history, character, and destiny are objects unfit for imagination to dwell on, and repellent to poetic art? I cannot think so. If it be a fact, as it often is, that we find little things pleasing and great things arid and formless, and if we are better poets in a line than in an epic, that is simply due to lack of faculty on our part, lack of imagination and memory, and above all to lack of discipline.

This might be shown, I think, by psychological analysis,

if we cared to rely on something so abstract and so debatable. For in what does the short-winded poet himself excel the common unimaginative person who talks or who stares? Is it that he thinks even less? Rather, I suppose, in that he feels more; in that his moment of intuition, though fleeting, has a vision, a scope, a symbolic something about it that renders it deep and expressive. Intensity, even momentary intensity, if it can be expressed at all, comports fullness and suggestion compressed into that intense moment. Yes, everything that comes to us at all must come to us at some time or other. It is always the fleeting moment in which we live. To this fleeting moment the philosopher, as well as the poet, is actually confined. Each must enrich it with his endless vistas, vistas necessarily focussed, if they are to be disclosed at all, in the eye of the observer, here and now. What makes the difference between a moment of poetic insight and a vulgar moment is that the passions of the poetic moment have more perspective. Even the short-winded poet selects his words so that they have a magic momentum in them which carries us, we know not how, to mountain-tops of intuition. Is not the poetic quality of phrases and images due to their concentrating and liberating the confused promptings left in us by a long experience? When we feel the poetic thrill, is it not that we find sweep in the concise and depth in the clear, as we might find all the lights of the sea in the water of a jewel? And what is a philosophic thought but such an epitome?

If a short passage is poetical because it is pregnant with suggestion of a few things, which stretches our attention and makes us rapt and serious, how much more poetical ought a vision to be which was pregnant with all we care for? Focus a little experience, give some scope and depth to your feeling, and it grows imaginative; give it more scope and more depth, focus all experience within it, make it a philosopher's vision of the world, and it will grow imaginative in a superlative degree, and be supremely poetical. The difficulty, after having the experience to symbolize, lies only in having enough imagination to hold and suspend it in a thought; and further to give this thought such verbal expression that others may be able

to decipher it, and to be stirred by it as by a wind of suggestion sweeping the whole forest of their memories.

Poetry, then, is not poetical for being short-winded or incidental, but, on the contrary, for being comprehensive and having range. If too much matter renders it heavy, that is the fault of the poet's weak intellect, not of the outstretched world. A quicker eye, a more synthetic imagination, might grasp a larger subject with the same ease. As in a supreme dramatic crisis all our life seems to be focussed in the present, and used in colouring our consciousness and shaping our decisions, so for each philosophic poet the whole world of man is gathered together; and he is never so much a poet as when, in a single cry, he summons all that has affinity to him in the universe, and salutes his ultimate destiny. It is the acme of life to understand life. The height of poetry is to speak the language of the gods.

There is a kind of sensualism or æstheticism that has decreed in our day that theory is not poetical; as if all the images and emotions that enter a cultivated mind were not saturated with theory. The prevalence of such a sensualism or æstheticism would alone suffice to explain the impotence of the arts. The life of theory is not less human or less emotional than the life of sense; it is more typically human and more keenly emotional. Philosophy is a more intense sort of experience than common life is, just as pure and subtle music, heard in retirement, is something keener and more intense than the howling of storms or the rumble of cities. For this reason philosophy, when a poet is not mindless, enters inevitably into his poetry, since it has entered into his life; or rather, the detail of things and the detail of ideas pass equally into his verse, when both alike lie in the path that has led him to his ideal. To object to theory in poetry would be like objecting to words there; for words, too, are symbols without the sensuous character of the things they stand for; and yet it is only by the net of new connexions which words throw over things, in recalling them, that poetry arises at all. Poetry is an attenuation, a rehandling, an echo of crude experience; it is itself a theoretic vision of things at arm's length.

Heard philosophies are sweet, but those unheard may be sweeter. They may be more unmixed and more profound for being adopted unconsciously, for being lived rather than taught. This is not merely to say what might be said of every work of art and of every natural object, that it could be made the starting-point for a chain of inferences that should reveal the whole universe, like the flower in the crannied wall. It is to say, rather, that the vital straining towards an ideal, definite but latent, when it dominates a whole life, may express that ideal more fully than could the best-chosen words.

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THE ELEMENTS OF POETRY

If poetry in its higher reaches is more philosophical than history, because it presents the memorable types of men and things apart from unmeaning circumstances, so in its primary substance and texture poetry is more philosophical than prose because it is nearer to our immediate experience. Poetry breaks up the trite conceptions designated by current words into the sensuous qualities out of which those conceptions were originally put together. We name what we conceive and believe in, not what we see ; things, not images ; souls, not voices and silhouettes. This naming, with the whole education of the senses which it accompanies, subserves the uses of life ; in order to thread our way through the labyrinth of objects which assault us, we must make a great selection in our sensuous experience ; half of what we see and hear we must pass over as insignificant, while we piece out the other half with such an ideal complement as is necessary to turn it into a fixed and well-ordered conception of the world. This labour of perception and understanding, this spelling of the material meaning of experience, is enshrined in our workaday language and ideas ; ideas which are literally poetic in the sense that they are " made " (for every conception in an adult mind is a fiction), but which are at the same

time prosaic because they are made economically, by abstraction, and for use.

When the child of poetic genius, who has learned this intellectual and utilitarian language in the cradle, goes afield and gathers for himself the aspects of nature, he begins to encumber his mind with the many living impressions which the intellect rejected, and which the language of the intellect can hardly convey; he labours with his nameless burden of perception, and wastes himself in aimless impulses of emotion and reverie, until finally the method of some art offers a vent to his inspiration, or to such part of it as can survive the test of time and the discipline of expression.

The poet retains by nature the innocence of the eye, or recovers it easily; he disintegrates the fictions of common perception into their sensuous elements, gathers these together again into chance groups as the accidents of his environment or the affinities of his temperament may conjoin them; and this wealth of sensation and this freedom of fancy, which make an extraordinary ferment in his ignorant heart, presently bubble over into some kind of utterance.

The fullness and sensuousness of such effusions bring them nearer to our actual perceptions than common discourse could come; yet they may easily seem remote, overloaded, and obscure to those accustomed to think entirely in symbols, and never to be interrupted in the algebraic rapidity of their thinking by a moment's pause and examination of heart, nor ever to plunge for a moment into that torrent of sensation and imagery over which the bridge of prosaic associations habitually carries us safe and dry to some conventional act. How slight that bridge commonly is, how much an affair of trestles and wire, we can hardly conceive until we have trained ourselves to an extreme sharpness of introspection. But psychologists have discovered, what laymen generally will confess, that we hurry by the procession of our mental images as we do by the traffic of the street, intent on business, gladly forgetting the noise and movement of the scene, and looking only for the corner we would turn or the door we would enter. Yet in our alertest moment

the depths of the soul are still dreaming; the real world stands drawn in bare outline against a background of chaos and unrest. Our logical thoughts dominate experience only as the parallels and meridians make a checkerboard of the sea. They guide our voyage without controlling the waves, which toss for ever in spite of our ability to ride over them to our chosen ends. Sanity is a madness put to good uses; waking life is a dream controlled.

Out of the neglected riches of this dream the poet fetches his wares. He dips into the chaos that underlies the rational shell of the world and brings up some superfluous image, some emotion dropped by the way, and reattaches it to the present object; he reinstates things unnecessary, he emphasizes things ignored, he paints in again into the landscape the tints which the intellect has allowed to fade from it. If he seems sometimes to obscure a fact, it is only because he is restoring an experience. The first element which the intellect rejects in forming its ideas of things is the emotion which accompanies the perception; and this emotion is the first thing the poet restores. He stops at the image, because he stops to enjoy. He wanders into the bypaths of association because the bypaths are delightful. The love of beauty which made him give measure and cadence to his words, the love of harmony which made him rhyme them, reappear in his imagination and make him select there also the material that is itself beautiful, or capable of assuming beautiful forms. The link that binds together the ideas, sometimes so wide apart, which his wit assimilates, is most often the link of emotion; they have in common some element of beauty or of horror.

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POETRY AND PROSE

Poetry, while truly poetical, never loses sight of initial feelings and underlying appeals; it is incorrigibly transcendental, and takes every present passion and every private dream in turn for the core of the universe. By

creating new signs, or by recasting and crossing those which have become conventional, it keeps communication massive and instinctive, immersed in music, and inexhaustible by clear thought.

Lying is a privilege of poets because they have not yet reached the level on which truth and error are discernible. Veracity and significance are not ideals for a primitive mind; we learn to value them as we learn to live, when we discover that the spirit cannot be wholly free and solipsistic. To have to distinguish fact from fancy is so great a violence to the inner man that not only poets, but theologians and philosophers, still protest against such a distinction. They urge (what is perfectly true for a rudimentary creature) that facts are mere conceptions and conceptions full-fledged facts; but this interesting embryonic lore they apply, in their intellectual weakness, to retracting or undermining those human categories which, though alone fruitful or applicable in life, are not congenial to their half-formed imagination. Retreating deeper into the inner chaos, they bring to bear the whole momentum of an irresponsible dialectic to frustrate the growth of representative ideas. In this they are genuine, if somewhat belated, poets, experimenting anew with solved problems, and fancying how creation might have moved upon other lines.

The great merit that prose shares with science is that it is responsible. Its conscience is a new and wiser imagination, by which creative thought is rendered cumulative and progressive; for a man does not build less boldly or solidly if he takes the precaution of building in baked brick. Prose is in itself meagre and bodiless, merely indicating the riches of the world. Its transparency helps us to look through it to the issue, and the signals it gives fill the mind with an honest assurance and a prophetic art far nobler than any ecstasy.

As men of action have a better intelligence than poets, if only their action is on a broad enough stage, so the prosaic rendering of experience has the greater value, if only the experience rendered covers enough human interests. Youth and aspiration indulge in poetry; a mature and masterful mind will often despise it, and prefer to express

itself laconically in prose. It is clearly proper that prosaic habits should supervene in this way on the poetical; for youth, being as yet little fed by experience, can find volume and depth only in the soul; the half-seen, the supramundane, the inexpressible, seem to it alone beautiful and worthy of homage. Time modifies this sentiment in two directions. It breeds lassitude and indifference towards impracticable ideals, originally no less worthy than the practicable. Ideals which cannot be realized, and are not fed at least by partial realizations, soon grow dormant. Life-blood passes to other veins; the urgent and palpitating interests of life appear in other quarters. While things impossible thus lose their serious charm, things actual reveal their natural order and variety; these not only can entertain the mind abstractly, but they can offer a thousand material rewards in observation and action. In their presence, a private dream begins to look rather cheap and hysterical. Not that existence has any dignity or prerogative in abstraction from will, but that will itself, being elastic, grows definite and firm when it is fed by success; and its formed and expressible ideals then put to shame the others, which have remained vague for want of practical expression. Mature interests centre on soluble problems and tasks capable of execution; it is at such points that the ideal can be really served. The individual's dream straightens and reassures itself by merging with the dream of humanity. To dwell, as irrational poets do, on some private experience, on some emotion without representative or ulterior value, then seems a waste of time. Fiction becomes less interesting than affairs, and poetry turns into a sort of incompetent whimper, a childish foreshortening of the outspread world.

On the other hand, prose has a great defect, which is abstractness. It drops the volume of experience in finding bodiless algebraic symbols by which to express it. Prose seems to be a use of language in the service of material life. It would tend, in that case, to undermine its own basis; for in proportion as signals for action are quick and efficacious they diminish their sensuous stimulus and fade from consciousness. Were language such a set of signals it would be something merely instrumental,

which if made perfect ought to be automatic and unconscious. It would be a buzzing in the ears, not a music native to the mind. Such a theory of language would treat it as a necessary evil and would look forward hopefully to the extinction of literature, in which it would recognize no intrinsic value. There is of course no reason to deprecate the use of vocables, or of any other material agency, to expedite affairs ; but a fine art of speech has to supervene upon a mere code of signals if speech is to add any ultimate charm to life. Prose, could it be purely indicative, would be ideally superfluous. A literary prose accordingly owns a double allegiance, and its life is amphibious. It must convey intelligence, but intelligence clothed in a language that lends the message an intrinsic value, and makes it delightful to apprehend apart from its importance in ultimate theory or practice. Prose is in that measure a fine art. It might be called poetry that had become pervasively representative, and was altogether faithful to its rational function.

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PRIMARY POETRY

THERE is both truth and illusion in the saying that primitive poets are sublime. *Genesis* and the *Iliad* (works doubtless backed by a long tradition) are indeed sublime. Primitive men, having perhaps developed language before the other arts, used it with singular directness to describe the chief episodes of life, which was all that life as yet contained. They had frank passions and saw things from single points of view. A breath from that early world seems to enlarge our natures, and to restore to language, which we have sophisticated, all its magnificence and truth. But there is more, for language is spontaneous ; it constitutes an act before it registers an observation. It gives vent to emotion before it is adjusted to things external and reduced, as it were, to its own echo rebounding from a refractory world. The lion's roar, the bellowing of bulls, even the sea's cadence has a great sublimity. Though hardly in itself

poetry, an animal cry, when still audible in human language, renders it also the unanswerable, the ultimate voice of nature. Nothing can so pierce the soul as the uttermost sigh of the body. An intense, inhospitable mind, filled with a single idea, in which all animal, social, and moral interests are fused together, speaks a language of incomparable force. Thus the Hebrew prophets, in their savage concentration, poured into one torrent all that their souls possessed or could dream of. What other men are wont to pursue in politics, business, religion, or art, they looked for from one wave of national repentance and consecration. Their age, swept by this ideal passion, possessed at the same time a fresh and homely vocabulary; and the result was an eloquence so elemental and combative, so imaginative and so bitterly practical, that the world has never heard its like. Such single-mindedness, with such heroic simplicity in words and images, is hardly possible in a late civilization. Cultivated poets are not unconsciously sublime.

The sublimity of early utterances should not be hailed, however, with unmixed admiration. It is a sublimity born of defect or at least of disproportion. The will asserts itself magnificently; images, like thunderclouds, seem to cover half the firmament at once. But such a will is sadly inexperienced; it has hardly tasted or even conceived any possible or high satisfactions. Its lurid firmament is poor in stars. To throw the whole mind upon something is not so great a feat when the mind has nothing else to throw itself upon. Every animal when goaded becomes intense; and it is perhaps merely the apathy in which mortals are wont to live that keeps them from being habitually sublime in their sentiments. The sympathy that makes a sheep hasten after its fellows, in vague alarm or in vague affection; the fierce premonitions that drive a bull to the heifer; the patience with which a hen sits on her eggs; the loyalty which a dog shows to his master—what thoughts may not all these instincts involve, which it needs only a medium of communication to translate into poetry?

Memorable nonsense, or sound with a certain hypnotic power, is the really primitive and radical form of poetry.

Nor is such poetry yet extinct: children still love and compose it, and every genuine poet, on one side of his genius, reverts to it from explicit speech. As all language has acquired its meaning, and did not have it in the beginning, so the man who launches a new locution, the poet who creates a symbol, must do so without knowing what significance it may eventually acquire, and conscious at best only of the emotional background from which it emerged. Pure poetry is pure experiment; and it is not strange that nine-tenths of it should be pure failure. For it matters little what unutterable things may have originally gone together with a phrase in the dreamer's mind; if they were not uttered and the phrase cannot call them back, this verbal relic is none the richer for the high company it may once have kept. Expressiveness is a most accidental matter. What a line suggests at one reading, it may never suggest again even to the same person. For this reason, among others, poets are partial to their own compositions; they truly discover there depths of meaning which exist for nobody else. Those readers who appropriate a poet and make him their own fall into a similar illusion; they attribute to him what they themselves supply, and whatever he reels out, lost in his own personal reverie, seems to them, like *sortes biblicae*, written to fit their own case.

Justice has never been done to Plato's remarkable consistency and boldness in declaring that poets are inspired by a divine madness and yet, when they transgress rational bounds, are to be banished from an ideal republic, though not without some marks of platonic regard. Instead of fillets, a modern age might assign them a coterie of flattering dames, and instead of banishment, starvation; but the result would be the same in the end. A poet is inspired because what occurs in his brain is a true experiment in creation. His apprehension plays with words and their meanings as nature, in any spontaneous variation, plays with her own structure. A mechanical force shifts the kaleidoscope; a new direction is given to growth or a new gist to signification. This inspiration, moreover, is mad, being wholly ignorant of its own issue; and though it has a confused fund of experience and verbal

habit on which to draw, it draws on this fund blindly and quite at random, consciously possessed by nothing but a certain stress and pregnancy and the pains, as it were, of parturition. Finally the new birth has to be inspected critically by the public censor before it is allowed to live; most probably it is too feeble and defective to prosper in the common air, or is a monster that violates some primary rule of civic existence, tormenting itself to disturb others.

Plato seems to have exaggerated the havoc which these poetic dragons can work in the world. They are in fact more often absurd than venomous, and no special legislation is needed to abolish them. They soon die quietly of universal neglect. The poetry that ordinarily circulates among a people is poetry of a secondary and conventional sort that propagates established ideas in trite metaphors. Popular poets are the parish priests of the Muse, retailing her ancient divinations to a long since converted public. As a tree in the autumn sheds leaves and seeds together, so a ripening experience comes indifferently to various manifestations, some barren and without further function, others fit to carry the parent experience over into another mind, and give it a new embodiment there. Expressiveness in the former case is dead, like that of a fossil; in the latter it is living and efficacious, recreating its original. The first is idle self-manifestation, the second rational art.

A poet, spokesman of his full soul at a given moment, cannot consider eventualities or think of anything but the message he is sent to deliver, whether the world can then hear it or not. God, he may feel sure, understands him, and in the eternal the beauty he sees and loves immortally justifies his enthusiasm. Nevertheless, critics must view his momentary ebullition from another side. They do not come to justify the poet in his own eyes; he amply relieves them of such a function. They come only to inquire how significant the poet's expressions are for humanity at large or for whatever public he addresses. They come to register the social or representative value of the poet's soul. His inspiration may have been an odd cerebral rumbling, a perfectly irrecoverable and wasted

intuition ; the exquisite quality it doubtless had to his own sense is now not to the purpose. A work of art is a public possession ; it is addressed to the world. By taking on a material embodiment, a spirit solicits attention and claims some kinship with the prevalent gods. Has it, critics should ask, the affinities needed for such intercourse ? Is it humane, is it rational, is it friendly to the rest of the soul ? To its inherent incommunicable charms it must add a kind of courtesy. If it wants other approval than its own, it cannot afford to regard no other aspiration.

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THE SUPREME POET

THERE are two directions in which it seems fitting that rational art should proceed, on the basis which a limited experience can give it. Art may come to buttress a particular form of life, or it may come to express it. All that we call industry, science, business, morality, buttresses our life ; it informs us about our conditions and adjusts us to them ; it equips us for life ; it lays out the ground for the game we are to play. This preliminary labour, however, need not be servile. To do it is also to exercise our faculties ; and in that exercise our faculties may grow free,—as the imagination of Lucretius, in tracing the course of the atoms, dances and soars most congenially. One extension of art, then, would be in the direction of doing artistically, joyfully, sympathetically, whatever we have to do. Literature in particular (which is involved in history, politics, science, affairs) might be throughout a work of art. It would become so not by being ornate, but by being appropriate ; and the sense of a great precision and justness would come over us as we read or wrote. It would delight us ; it would make us see how beautiful, how satisfying, is the art of being observant, economical, and sincere. The philosophical or comprehensive poet, like Homer, like Shakespeare, would be a poet of business. He would have a taste for the world in which he lived, and a clean view of it.

There remains a second form of rational art, that of expressing the ideal towards which we would move under these improved conditions. For as we react we manifest an inward principle, expressed in that reaction. We have a nature that selects its own direction, and the direction in which practical arts shall transform the world. The outer life is for the sake of the inner; discipline is for the sake of freedom, and conquest for the sake of self-possession. This inner life is wonderfully redundant; there is, namely, very much more in it than a consciousness of those acts by which the body adjusts itself to its surroundings. *Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben*; each sense has its arbitrary quality, each language its arbitrary euphony and prosody; every game has its creative laws, every soul its own tender reverberations and secret dreams. Life has a margin of play which might grow broader, if the sustaining nucleus were more firmly established in the world. To the art of working well a civilized race would add the art of playing well. To play with nature and make it decorative, to play with the overtones of life and make them delightful, is a sort of art. It is the ultimate, the most artistic sort of art, but it will never be practised successfully so long as the other sort of art is in a backward state; for if we do not know our environment, we shall mistake our dreams for a part of it, and so spoil our science by making it fantastic, and our dreams by making them obligatory. The art and the religion of the past, as we see conspicuously in Dante, have fallen into this error. To correct it would be to establish a new religion and a new art, based on moral liberty and on moral courage.

Who shall be the poet of this double insight? He has never existed, but he is needed nevertheless. It is time some genius should appear to reconstitute the shattered picture of the world. He should live in the continual presence of all experience, and respect it; he should at the same time understand nature, the ground of that experience; and he should also have a delicate sense for the ideal echoes of his own passions, and for all the colours of his possible happiness. All that can inspire a poet is contained in this task, and nothing less than this task would exhaust

a poet's inspiration. We may hail this needed genius from afar. Like the poets in Dante's limbo, when Virgil returns among them, we may salute him, saying: *Onorate l' altissimo poeta.* Honour the most high poet, honour the highest possible poet. But this supreme poet is in limbo still.

PART IV

LITTLE ESSAYS ON POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS

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AGAINST PRYING BIOGRAPHERS

Our ignorance of the life of a great writer is not, I think, much to be regretted. His work preserves that part of him which he himself would have wished to preserve. Perfect conviction ignores itself, proclaiming the public truth. To reach this no doubt requires a peculiar genius which is called intelligence; for intelligence is quickness in seeing things as they are. But where intelligence is attained, the rest of a man, like the scaffolding to a finished building, becomes irrelevant. We do not wish it to intercept our view of the solid structure, which alone was intended by the artist—if he was building for others, and was not a coxcomb. It is his intellectual vision that the naturalist in particular wishes to hand down to posterity, not the shabby incidents that preceded that vision in his own person. These incidents, even if they were by chance interesting, could not be repeated in us; but the vision into which the thinker poured his faculties, and to which he devoted his vigils, is communicable to us also, and may become a part of ourselves.

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THE DEARTH OF GREAT MEN

When chaos has penetrated into the moral being of nations they can hardly be expected to produce great men. A great man need not be virtuous nor his opinions right, but he must have a firm mind, a distinctive, luminous character; if he is to dominate things something must

be dominant in him. We feel him to be great in that he clarifies and brings to expression something which was potential in the rest of us but which with our burden of flesh and circumstance we were too torpid to utter. The great man is a spontaneous variation in humanity; but not in any direction. A spontaneous variation might be a mere madness or mutilation or monstrosity; in finding the variation admirable we evidently invoke some principle of order to which it conforms. Perhaps it makes explicit what was preformed in us also; as when a poet finds the absolutely right phrase for a feeling, or when nature suddenly astonishes us with a form of absolute beauty. Or perhaps it makes an unprecedented harmony out of things existing before, but jangled and detached. The first man was a great man for this latter reason; having been an ape perplexed and corrupted by his multiplying instincts, he suddenly found a new way of being decent, by harnessing all those instincts together, through memory and imagination, and giving each in turn a measure of its due; which is what we call being rational. It is a new road to happiness, if you have strength enough to castigate a little the various impulses that sway you in turn. Why then is the martyr, who sacrifices everything to one attraction, distinguished from the criminal or the fool, who do the same thing? Evidently because the spirit that in the martyr destroys the body is the very spirit which the body is stifling in the rest of us; and although his private inspiration may be irrational, the tendency of it is not, but reduces the public conscience to act before any one else has had the courage to do so. Greatness is spontaneous; simplicity, trust in some one clear instinct, are essential to it; but the spontaneous variation must be in the direction of some possible sort of order; it must exclude and leave behind what is incapable of being moralized. How, then, should there be any great heroes, saints, artists, philosophers, or legislators in an age when nobody trusts himself, or feels any confidence in reason, in an age when the word *dogmatic* is a term of reproach? Greatness has character and severity, it is deep and sane, it is distinct and perfect. For this reason there is none of it to-day.

There is indeed another kind of greatness, or rather largeness of mind, which consists in being a synthesis of humanity in its current phases, even if without prophetic emphasis or direction: the breadth of a Goethe, rather than the fineness of a Shelley or a Leopardi. But such largeness of mind, not to be vulgar, must be impartial, comprehensive, Olympian; it would not be greatness if its miscellany were not dominated by a clear genius and if before the confusion of things the poet or philosopher were not himself delighted, exalted, and by no means confused. Nor does this presume omniscience on his part. It is not necessary to fathom the ground or the structure of everything in order to know what to make of it. Stones do not disconcert a builder because he may not happen to know what they are chemically; and so the unsolved problems of life and nature, and the Babel of society, need not disturb the genial observer, though he may be incapable of unravelling them. He may set these dark spots down in their places, like so many caves or wells in a landscape, without feeling bound to scrutinize their depths simply because their depths are obscure. Unexplored they may have a sort of lustre, explored they might merely make him blind, and it may be a sufficient understanding of them to know that they are not worth investigating. In this way the most chaotic age and the most motley horrors might be mirrored limpidly in a great mind, as the Renaissance was mirrored in the works of Raphael and Shakespeare; but the master's eye itself must be single, his style unmistakable, his visionary interest in what he depicts frank and supreme. Hence this comprehensive sort of greatness too is impossible in an age when moral confusion is pervasive, when characters are complex, undecided, troubled by the mere existence of what is not congenial to them, eager to be not themselves; when, in a word, thought is weak and the flux of things overwhelms it. The mind has forgotten its proper function, which is to crown life by quickening it into intelligence, and thinks if it could only prove that it accelerated life, that might perhaps justify its existence; like a philosopher at sea who, to make himself useful, should blow into the sail.

A great imaginative apathy has fallen on the mind. One-half the learned world is amused in tinkering obsolete armour, as Don Quixote did his helmet; deputing it, after a series of catastrophes, to be at last sound and invulnerable. The other half, the naturalists who have studied psychology and evolution, look at life from the outside, and the processes of nature make them forget her uses. Bacon indeed had prized science for adding to the comforts of life, a function still commemorated by positivists in their eloquent moments. Habitually, however, when they utter the word progress it is, in their mouths, a synonym for inevitable change, or at best for change in that direction which they conceive to be on the whole predominant. If they combine with physical speculation some elements of morals, these are usually purely formal, to the effect that happiness is to be pursued (probably, alas! because to do so is a psychological law); but what happiness consists in we gather only from casual observations or by putting together their national prejudices and party saws.

The truth is that even this radical school, emancipated as it thinks itself, is suffering from the after-effects of supernaturalism. Like children escaped from school, they find their whole happiness in freedom. They are proud of how much they have rejected, as if a great wit were required to do so; but they do not know what they want. If you astonish them by demanding what is their positive ideal, further than that there should be a great many people and that they should be all alike, they will say at first that what ought to be is obvious, and later they will submit the matter to a majority vote. They have discarded the machinery in which their ancestors embodied the ideal; they have not perceived that those symbols stood for the life of reason and gave fantastic and embarrassed expression to what, in itself, is pure humanity; and they have thus remained entangled in the colossal error that ideals are something adventitious and unmeaning, not having a soil in mortal life nor a possible fulfilment there.

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THE INTELLECT OUT OF FASHION

TRUSTFUL faith in evolution and a longing for intense life are characteristic of contemporary sentiment,[1] but they do not appear to be consistent with that contempt for the intellect which is no less characteristic of it. Human intelligence is certainly a product, and a late and highly organized product, of evolution; it ought apparently to be as much admired as the eyes of molluscs or the antennæ of ants. And if life is better the more intense and concentrated it is, intelligence would seem to be the best form of life. But the degree of intelligence which this age possesses makes it so very uncomfortable that, in this instance, it asks for something less vital, and sighs for what evolution has left behind. In the presence of such cruelly distinct things as astronomy or such cruelly confused things as theology it feels *la nostalgie de la boue.* Finding their intelligence enslaved, our contemporaries suppose that intelligence is essentially servile; instead of freeing it, they try to elude it. Their philosophy is an effort to realize this revulsion, to disintegrate intelligence and stimulate sympathetic experience. Its charm lies in the relief which it brings to a stale imagination, an imagination from which religion has vanished and which is kept stretched on the machinery of business and society, or on small half-borrowed passions which they clothe in a mean rhetoric and dot with vulgar pleasures. Not free enough themselves morally, but bound to the world partly by piety and partly by industrialism, they cannot think of rising to a detached contemplation of earthly things, and of life itself and evolution; they revert rather to sensibility, and seek some by-path of instinct or dramatic sympathy in which to wander. Having no stomach for the ultimate, they burrow downwards towards the primitive. But the longing to be primitive is a disease of culture; it is archaism in morals. To be so preoccupied with vitality is a symptom of anæmia.

[1] Written in 1912.

When life was really vigorous and young, in Homeric times for instance, no one seemed to fear that it might be squeezed out of existence either by the incubus of matter or by the petrifying blight of intelligence. Life was like the light of day, something to use, or to waste, or to enjoy. It was not a thing to worship; and often the chief luxury of living consisted in dealing death about vigorously. Life indeed was loved, and the beauty and pathos of it were felt exquisitely; but its beauty and pathos lay in the divineness of its model and in its own fragility. No one paid it the equivocal compliment of thinking it a substance or a material force. Nobility was not then impossible in sentiment, because there were ideals in life higher and more indestructible than life itself, which life might illustrate and to which it might fitly be sacrificed. Nothing can be meaner than the anxiety to live on, to live on anyhow and in any shape; a spirit with any honour is not willing to live except in its own way, and a spirit with any wisdom is not over-eager to live at all. In those days men recognized immortal gods and resigned themselves to being mortal. Yet those were the truly vital and instinctive days of the human spirit. Only when vitality is low do people find material things oppressive and ideal things unsubstantial. Now there is more motion than life, and more haste than force; we are driven to distraction by the ticking of the tiresome clocks, material and social, by which we are obliged to regulate our existence. We need ministering angels to fly to us from somewhere, even if it be from the depths of protoplasm. We must bathe in the currents of some non-human vital flood, like consumptives in their last extremity who must bask in the sunshine and breathe the mountain air; and our disease is not without its sophistry to convince us that we were never so well before, or so mightily conscious of being alive.

Without great men and without clear convictions this age is nevertheless very active intellectually; it is studious, empirical, inventive, sympathetic. Its wisdom consists in a certain contrite openness of mind; it flounders, but at least in floundering it has gained a sense of possible depths in all directions. Under these circumstances,

some triviality and great confusion in its positive achievements are not unpromising things, nor even unamiable. These are the *Wanderjahre* of faith; it looks smilingly at every new face, which might perhaps be that of a predestined friend; it chases after any engaging stranger; it even turns up again from time to time at home, full of a new tenderness for all it had abandoned there. But to settle down would be impossible now. The intellect, the judgment are in abeyance. Life is running turbid and full; and it is no marvel that reason, after vainly supposing that it ruled the world, should abdicate as gracefully as possible, when the world is so obviously the sport of cruder powers—vested interests, tribal passions, stock sentiments, and chance majorities. Having no responsibility laid upon it, reason has become irresponsible. Many critics and philosophers seem to conceive that thinking aloud is itself literature. Sometimes reason tries to lend some moral authority to its present masters, by proving how superior they are to itself; it worships evolution, instinct, novelty, action. At other times it retires into the freehold of those temperaments whom this world has ostracized, the region of the non-existent, and comforts itself with its indubitable conquests there. Indeed, what happens to exist is too alien and accidental to absorb all the play of a free mind, whose function, after it has come to clearness and made its peace with things, is to touch them with its own moral and intellectual light, and to exist for its own sake.

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ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE

Language, with the logic embedded in it, is a repository of terms fixed by identifying successive appearances, as the external world is a repository of objects conceived by superposing appearances that exist together. Being formed on different principles these two orders of conception—the logical and the physical—do not coincide, and the attempt to fuse them into one system of demon-

strable reality or moral physics is doomed to failure by the very nature of the terms compared. When the Eleatics proved the impossibility—*i.e.*, the inexpressibility—of motion, or when Kant and his followers proved the imaginary character of all objects of experience and of all natural knowledge, their task was made easy by the native diversity between the concretions in existence which were the object of their thought and the concretions in discourse which were its measure. The two do not fit; and intrenched as these philosophers were in the forms of logic they compelled themselves to reject as unthinkable everything not fully expressible in those particular forms. Thus they took their revenge upon the vulgar who, being busy chiefly with material things and dwelling in an atmosphere of sensuous images, call unreal and abstract every product of logical construction or reflective analysis. These logical products, however, are not really abstract, but, as we have said, concretions arrived at by a different method than that which results in material conceptions. Whereas the conception of a thing is a local conglomerate of several simultaneous appearances, logical entity is recognized by a fusion in memory of similar appearances temporally distinct.

Thus the many armed with prejudice and the few armed with logic fight an eternal battle, the logician charging the physical world with unintelligibility and the man of common-sense charging the logical world with abstractness and unreality. The former view is the more profound, since association by similarity is the more elementary and gives constancy to meanings; while the latter view is the more practical, since association by contiguity alone informs the mind about the mechanical sequence of its own experience. Neither principle can be dispensed with, and each errs only in denouncing the other and wishing to be omnivorous, as if on the one hand logic could make anybody understand the history of events and the conjunction of objects, or on the other hand as if cognitive and moral processes could have any other terms than constant and ideal natures. The namable essence of things or the standard of values must always be an ideal figment; existence must always be an empirical

fact. The former remains always remote from natural existence and the latter irreducible to a logical principle.

Reliance on external perception, constant appeals to concrete fact and physical sanctions, have always led the mass of reasonable men to magnify concretions in existence and belittle concretions in discourse. They are too clever, as they feel, to mistake words for things. The most authoritative thinker on this subject, because the most mature, Aristotle himself, taught that things had reality, individuality, independence, and were the outer cause of perception, while general ideas, products of association by similarity, existed only in the mind. The public, pleased at its ability to understand this doctrine and overlooking the more incisive part of the philosopher's teaching, could go home comforted and believing that material things were primary and perfect entities, while ideas were only abstractions, effects those realities produced on our incapable minds. Aristotle, however, had a juster view of general concepts and made in the end the whole material universe gravitate around them and feel their influence, though in a metaphysical and magic fashion to which a more advanced natural science need no longer appeal. While in the shock of life man was always coming upon the accidental, in the quiet of reflection he could not but recast everything in ideal moulds and retain nothing but eternal natures and intelligible relations. Aristotle conceived that while the origin of knowledge lay in the impact of matter upon sense its goal was the comprehension of essences, and that while man was involved by his animal nature in the accidents of experience he was also by virtue of his rationality a participator in eternal truth. A substantial justice was thus done both to the conditions and to the functions of human life, although, for want of a natural history inspired by mechanical ideas, this double allegiance remained somewhat baffling and incomprehensible in its basis. Aristotle, being a true philosopher and pupil of experience, preferred incoherence to partiality.

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MALICIOUS PSYCHOLOGY

THE English psychologists who first disintegrated the idea of substance did not study the question wholly for its own sake or in the spirit of a science that aims at nothing but a historical analysis of mind. They had a more or less malicious purpose behind their psychology. They thought that if they could once show how metaphysical ideas are made they would discredit those ideas and banish them for ever from the world. If they retained confidence in any notion—as Hobbes in body, Locke in matter and in God, Berkeley in spirits, and Kant, the inheritor of this malicious psychology, in the thing-in-itself and in heaven—it was merely by inadvertence or want of courage. The principle of their reasoning, where they chose to apply it, was always this, that ideas whose materials could all be accounted for in consciousness and referred to sense or to the operations of mind were thereby exhausted and deprived of further validity. Only the unaccountable, or rather the uncriticized, could be true. Consequently the advance of psychology meant, in this school, the retreat of reason; for as one notion after another was clarified and reduced to its elements it was *ipso facto* deprived of its function. It became impossible to be at once quite serious and quite intelligent; for to use reason was to indulge in subjective fiction, while conscientiously to abstain from using it was to sink back upon inarticulate and brutish instinct.

In Hume this sophistication was frankly avowed. Philosophy discredited itself; but a man of parts, who loved intellectual games even better than backgammon, might take a hand with the wits and historians of his day, until the clock struck twelve and the party was over. Even in Kant, though the mood was more cramped and earnest, the mystical sophistication was quite the same. Kant, too, imagined that the bottom had been knocked out of the world. Since space and time could not repel the accusation of being the necessary forms of perception,

space and time were not to be much thought of; and when the sad truth was disclosed that causality and the categories were instruments by which the idea of nature had to be constructed, if such an idea was to exist at all, then nature and causality shrivelled up and were dishonoured together; so that, the soul's occupation being gone, she must needs appeal to some mysterious oracle, some abstract and irrelevant omen within the breast, and muster up all the stern courage of an accepted despair to carry her through this world of mathematical illusion into some green and infantile paradise beyond.

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ON ESSE EST PERCIPI

In the melodramatic fashion so common in what is called philosophy we may delight ourselves with such flashes of lightning as this: *esse est percipi*. The truth of this paradox lies in the fact that through perception alone can we get at being—a modest and familiar notion which makes, as Plato's *Theaetetus* shows, not a bad point of departure for a serious theory of knowledge. The sophistical intent of it, however, is to deny our right to make a distinction which in fact we do make and which the speaker himself is making as he utters the phrase; for he would not be so proud of himself if he thought he was thundering a tautology. If a thing were never perceived, or inferred from perception, we should indeed never know that it existed; but after we become aware that we have perceived or inferred it, it may remain conducive to comprehension and practical competence to continue to regard it as existing independently of our perception; and our ability to make this supposition is registered in the difference between the two words *to be* and *to be perceived* —words which are by no means synonymous but designate two very different relations of things to thought. Such idealism at one fell swoop, through a collapse of assertive intellect with a withdrawal of reason into self-consciousness, has the puzzling character of any clever pun, that

suspends the fancy between two incompatible but irresistible meanings. The art of such sophistry is to choose for an axiom some ambiguous phrase which taken in one sense is a truism and taken in another is an absurdity; and then, by showing the truth of that truism, to give out that the absurdity has also been proved. It is a truism to say that I am the only seat or locus of my ideas, and that whatever I know is known by me; it is an absurdity to say that I am the only object of my thought and perception.

To confuse the instrument with its function and the operation with its meaning has been a persistent foible in modern philosophy. It could thus come about that the function of intelligence should be altogether misconceived and in consequence denied, when it was discovered that figments of reason could never become elements of sense but must always remain, as of course they should, ideal and regulative objects, and therefore objects to which a practical and energetic intellect will tend to give the name of realities. Matter is a reality to the practical intellect because it is a necessary and ideal term in the mastery of experience; while negligible sensations, like dreams, are called illusions by the same authority because, though actual enough while they last, they have no sustained function and no right to practical dominion.

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KANT

KANT is remarkable among sincere philosophers for the pathetic separation which existed between his personal beliefs and his official discoveries. His personal beliefs were mild and half orthodox and hardly differed from those of Leibniz; but officially he was entangled in the subjective criticism of knowledge, and found that the process of knowing was so complicated, and so exquisitely contrived to make knowledge impossible, that while the facts of the universe were there, and we might have, like Leibniz, a shrewd and exact notion of what they were,

officially we had no right to call them facts or to allege that we knew them. As there was much in Kant's personal belief which this critical method of his could not sanction, so there were implications and consequences latent in his critical method which he never absorbed, being an old man when he adopted it. One of these latent implications was egotism.

The fact that each spirit was confined to its own perceptions condemned it to an initial subjectivity and agnosticism. What things might exist besides his ideas he could never know. That such things existed was not doubted; Kant never accepted that amazing principle of dogmatic egotism that nothing is able to exist unless I am able to know it. On the contrary he assumed that human perceptions, with the moral postulates which he added to them, were symbols of a real world of forces or spirits existing beyond. This assumption reduced our initial idiotism to a constitutional taint of our animal minds, not unlike original sin, and excluded that romantic pride and self-sufficiency in which a full-fledged transcendentalism always abounds.

To this contrite attitude of Kant's agnosticism his personal character and ethics corresponded. A wizened little old bachelor, a sedentary provincial scribe, scrupulous and punctual, a courteous moralist who would have us treat humanity in the person of another as an end and never merely as a means, a pacifist and humanitarian who so revered the moral sense according to Shaftesbury and Adam Smith that, after having abolished earth and heaven, he was entirely comforted by the sublime truth that nevertheless it remained wrong to tell a lie—such a figure has nothing in it of the officious egotist or the superman. Yet his very love of exactitude and his scruples about knowledge, misled by the psychological fallacy that nothing can be an object of knowledge except some idea in the mind, led him in the end to subjectivism; while his rigid conscience, left standing in that unnatural void, led him to attribute absoluteness to what he called the categorical imperative. But this void outside and this absolute oracle within are germs of egotism, and germs of the most virulent species.

The categorical imperative, or unmistakable voice of conscience, was originally something external enough—too external, indeed, to impose by itself a moral obligation. The thunders of Sinai and the voice from the whirlwind in Job fetched their authority from the suggestion of power; there spoke an overwhelming physical force of which we were the creatures and the playthings, a voice which far from interpreting our sense of justice, or our deepest hopes, threatened to crush and to flout them. If some of its commandments were moral, others were ritual or even barbarous; the only moral sanction common to them all came from our natural prudence and love of life; our wisdom imposed on us the fear of the Lord. The prophets and the gospel did much to identify this external divine authority with the human conscience; an identification which required a very elaborate theory of sin and punishment and of existence in other worlds, since the actual procedure of nature and history can never be squared with any ideal of right.

In Kant, who in this matter followed Calvin, the independence between the movement of nature, both within and without the soul, and the ideal of right was exaggerated into an opposition. The categorical imperative was always authoritative, but perhaps never obeyed. While matter and life moved on in their own unregenerate way, a principle which they *ought* to follow, overarched and condemned them, and constrained them to condemn themselves. Human nature was totally depraved and incapable of the least merit, nor had it any power of itself to become righteous. Its amiable spontaneous virtues, having but a natural motive, were splendid vices. Moral worth began only when the will, transformed at the touch of unmerited grace, surrendered every impulse in overwhelming reverence for the divine law.

This Calvinistic doctrine might seem to rebuke all actual inclinations, and far from making the will morally absolute, as egotism would, to raise over against it an alien authority, what *ought* to be willed. Such was, of course, Kant's ostensible intention; but sublime as such a situation was declared to be, he felt rather dissatisfied in its presence. A categorical imperative crying in the wilderness, a duty

which nobody need listen to, or suffer for disregarding, seemed rather a forlorn authority. To save the face of absolute right another world seemed to be required, as in orthodox Christianity, in which it might be duly vindicated and obeyed.

Kant's scepticism, by which all knowledge of reality was denied us, played conveniently into the hand of this pious requirement. If the whole natural world, which we can learn something about by experience, is merely an idea in our minds, nothing prevents any sort of real but unknown world from lying about us unawares. What could be more plausible and opportune than that the categorical imperative which the human mind, the builder of this visible world, had rejected, should in that other real world be the head stone of the corner?

This happy thought, had it stood alone, might have seemed a little fantastic; but it was only a laboured means of re-establishing the theology of Leibniz, in which Kant privately believed, behind the transcendental idealism which he had put forward professorially. The dogmatic system from which he started seemed to him, as it stood, largely indefensible and a little oppressive. To purify it he adopted a fallacious principle of criticism, namely, that our ideas are all we can know, a principle which, if carried out, would undermine that whole system, and every other. He, therefore, hastened to adopt a corrective principle of reconstruction, no less fallacious, namely, that conscience bids us assume certain things to be realities which reason and experience know nothing of. This brought him round to a qualified and ambiguous form of his original dogmas, to the effect that although there was no reason to think that God, heaven, and free-will exist, we ought to act as if they existed, and might call that wilful action of ours faith in their existence.

Thus in the philosophy of Kant there was a stimulating ambiguity in the issue. He taught rather less than he secretly believed, and his disciples, seizing the principle of his scepticism, but lacking his conservative instincts, believed rather less than he taught them. Doubtless in his private capacity Kant hoped, if he did not believe, that God, free-will, and another life subsisted in fact, as

every believer had hitherto supposed; it was only the method of proving their reality that had been illegitimate. For no matter how strong the usual arguments might seem (and they did not seem very strong) they could convey no transcendent assurance; on the contrary, the more proofs you draw for anything from reason and experience, the better you prove that that thing is a mere idea in your mind. It was almost prudent, so to speak, that God, freedom, and immortality, if they had claims to reality, should remain without witness in the sphere of "knowledge," as inadvertently or ironically it was still called; but to circumvent this compulsory lack of evidence God had at least implanted in us a veridical conscience, which if it took itself seriously (as it ought to do, being a conscience) would constrain us to postulate what, though we could never "know" it, happened to be the truth. Such was the way in which the good Kant thought to play hide-and-seek with reality.

Kant had a private mysticism in reserve to raise upon the ruins of science and common-sense. Knowledge was to be removed to make way for faith. This task is ambiguous, and the equivocation involved in it is perhaps the deepest of those confusions with which German metaphysics has since struggled, and which have made it waver between the deepest introspection and the dreariest mythology. To substitute faith for knowledge might mean to teach the intellect humility, to make it aware of its theoretic and transitive function as a faculty for hypothesis and rational fiction, building a bridge of methodical inferences and ideal unities between fact and fact, between endeavour and satisfaction. It might be to remind us, sprinkling over us, as it were, the Lenten ashes of an intellectual contrition, that our thoughts are air even as our bodies are dust, momentary vehicles and products of an immortal vitality in God and in nature, which fosters and illumines us for a moment before it lapses into other forms.

Had Kant proposed to humble and concentrate into a practical faith *the same natural ideas* which had previously been taken for absolute knowledge, his intention would have been innocent, his conclusions wise, and his analysis

free from venom and *arrière-pensée*. Man, because of his finite and propulsive nature and because he is a pilgrim and a traveller throughout his life, is obliged to have faith : the absent, the hidden, the eventual, is the necessary object of his concern. But what else shall his faith rest in except in what the necessary forms of his perception present to him and what the indispensable categories of his understanding help him to conceive ? What possible objects are there for faith except objects of a possible experience ? What else should a practical and moral philosophy concern itself with, except the governance and betterment of the human world ? It is surely by using his only possible forms of perception and his inevitable categories of understanding that man may yet learn, as he has partly learned already, to live and prosper in the universe. Had Kant's criticism amounted simply to such a confession of the tentative, practical, and hypothetical nature of human reason, it would have been wholly acceptable to the wise ; and its appeal to faith would have been nothing but an expression of natural vitality and courage, just as its criticism of knowledge would have been nothing but a better acquaintance with self. This faith would have called the forces of impulse and passion to reason's support, not to its betrayal. Faith would have meant faith in the intellect, a faith naturally expressing man's practical and ideal nature, and the only faith yet sanctioned by its fruits.

Side by side with this reinstatement of reason, however, which was not absent from Kant's system in its critical phase and in its application to science, there lurked in his substitution of faith for knowledge another and sinister intention. He wished to blast as insignificant, because " subjective," the whole structure of human intelligence, with all the lessons of experience and all the triumphs of human skill, and to attach absolute validity instead to certain echoes of his rigoristic religious education. These notions were surely just as subjective, and far more local and transitory, than the common machinery of thought ; and it was actually proclaimed to be an evidence of their sublimity that they remained entirely without practical sanction in the form of success or of happiness. The

" categorical imperative " was a shadow of the ten commandments ; the postulates of practical reason were the minimal tenets of the most abstract Protestantism. These fossils, found unaccountably imbedded in the old man's mind, he regarded as the evidences of an inward but supernatural revelation.

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TRANSCENDENTALISM

The legitimacy of the transcendental method is so obvious that it is baffling when unfamiliar and trifling when understood. It is somewhat like the scientific discovery that man is an animal ; for in spite of its pompous language and unction, transcendentalism, when not transcended, is a stopping short at the vegetative and digestive stage of consciousness, where nothing seems to be anything but a play of variations in the immediate. That is what science has risen from ; it is the primordial slime. But to stop there and make life consist in hearing the mind work is illiberal and childish. Maturity lies in taking reason at its word and learning to believe and to do what it bids us. Inexperience, pedantry, and mysticism — three obstacles to wisdom—were not absent from those academic geniuses by whom transcendentalism was first brought forth. They became consequently entangled in their profundity, and never were masters of their purposes or of their tools.

It was a thing taken for granted in ancient and scholastic philosophy that a being dwelling, like man, in the immediate, whose moments are in flux, needed constructive reason to interpret his experience and paint in his unstable consciousness some symbolic picture of the world. To have reverted to this constructive process and studied its stages is an interesting achievement ; but the construction is already made by common-sense and science, and it was visionary insolence in the Germans to propose to make that construction otherwise. Retrospective self-consciousness is dearly bought if it inhibits the intellect and embarrasses the inferences which, in its spontaneous

operation, it has known perfectly how to make. In the heat of scientific theorizing or dialectical argument it is sometimes salutary to be reminded that we are men thinking; but, after all, it is no news. We know that life is a dream, and how should thinking be more? Yet the thinking must go on, and the only vital question is to what practical or poetic conceptions it is able to lead us.

Such visions are necessarily fleeting, because the human mind has long before settled its grammar, and discovered, after much groping and many defeats, the general forms in which experience will allow itself to be stated. These general forms are the principles of common sense and positive science, no less imaginative in their origin than those notions which we now call transcendental, but grown prosaic, like the metaphors of common speech, by dint of repetition.

Since the material world is an object for thought, it can hardly lie in the same plane of reality with the thought to which it appears. The spectator on this side of the foot-lights cannot expect to figure in the play or to see himself strutting among the actors on the boards. He listens and is served, being at once impotent and supreme. It has been well said that

> Only the free divine the laws,
> The causeless only know the cause.

Conversely, what in such a transcendental sense is causeless and free can evidently not be causal or determinant, being something altogether universal and notional, without inherent determinations or specific affinities. The objects figuring in consciousness will have implications and will require causes; not so the consciousness itself. The Ego to which all things appear equally, whatever their form or history, is the ground of nothing incidental: no specific characters or order found in the world can be attributed to its efficacy. The march of experience is not determined by the mere fact that experience exists. Consciousness is not itself dynamic. It is merely an abstract name for the actuality of its random objects.

To subjectify the universe is not to improve it, much less to dissolve it. The space I call my idea has all the

properties of the space I called my environment; it has the same inevitable presence and the same perpetual validity.

The whole transcendental philosophy, if made ultimate, is false, and nothing but a private perspective. The will is absolute neither in the individual nor in humanity. Nature is not a product of the mind, but on the contrary there is an external world, ages prior to any idea of it, which the mind recognizes and feeds upon. There is a steady human nature within us, which our moods and passions may wrong but cannot annul. There is no categorical imperative but only the operation of instincts and interests more or less subject to discipline and mutual adjustment. Our whole life is a compromise, an incipient loose harmony between the passions of the soul and the forces of nature, forces which likewise generate and protect the souls of other creatures, endowing them with powers of expression and self-assertion comparable with our own, and with aims no less sweet and worthy in their own eyes; so that the quick and honest mind cannot but practise courtesy in the universe, exercising its will without vehemence or forced assurance, judging with serenity, and in everything discarding the word absolute as the most false and the most odious of words. As Montaigne observes, "He who sets before him, as in a picture, this vast image of our mother Nature in her entire majesty; who reads in her aspect such universal and continual variety; who discerns himself therein, and not himself only but a whole kingdom, to be but a most delicate dot—he alone esteems things according to the just measure of their greatness."

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PRECARIOUS RATIONALISMS

The most legitimate constructions of reason soon become merely speculative, soon pass, I mean, beyond the sphere of practical application; and the man of affairs, adjusting himself at every turn to the opaque brutality of fact, loses his respect for the higher reaches of logic and forgets

that his recognition of facts themselves is an application of logical principles. In his youth, perhaps, he pursued metaphysics, which are the love-affairs of the understanding; now he is wedded to convention and seeks in the passion he calls business or in the habit he calls duty some substitute for natural happiness. He fears to question the value of his life, having found that such questioning adds nothing to his powers; and he thinks the mariner would die of old age in port who should wait for reason to justify his voyage. Reason is indeed like the sad Iphigenia whom her royal father, the Will, must sacrifice before any wind can fill his sails. The emanation of all things from the One involves not only the incarnation but the crucifixion of the Logos. Reason must be eclipsed by its supposed expressions, and can only shine in a darkness which does not comprehend it. For reason is essentially hypothetical and subsidiary, and can never constitute what it expresses in man, nor what it recognizes in nature.

If logic should refuse to make this initial self-sacrifice and to subordinate itself to impulse and fact, it would immediately become irrational and forfeit its own justification. For it exists by virtue of a human impulse and in answer to a human need. To ask a man, in the satisfaction of a metaphysical passion, to forgo every other good is to render him fanatical and to shut his eyes daily to the sun in order that he may see better by the star-light. The radical fault of rationalism is not any incidental error committed in its deductions, although such necessarily abound in every human system. Its great original sin is its denial of its own basis and its refusal to occupy its due place in the world, an ignorant fear of being invalidated by its history and dishonoured, as it were, if its ancestry is hinted at. Only bastards should fear that fate, and criticism would indeed be fatal to a bastard philosophy, to one that does not spring from practical reason and has no roots in life. But those products of reason which arise by reflection on fact, and those spontaneous and demonstrable systems of ideas which can be verified in experience, and thus serve to render the facts calculable and articulate, will lose nothing of their lustre by discovering their lineage. So the idea of nature remains

true after psychology has analysed its origin, and not only true, but beautiful and beneficent. For unlike many negligible products of speculative fancy it is woven out of recurrent perceptions into a hypothetical cause from which further perceptions can be deducted as they are actually experienced. Such a mechanism once discovered confirms itself at every breath we draw, and surrounds every object in history and nature with infinite and true suggestions, making it doubly interesting, fruitful, and potent over the mind.

If the idealist fears and deprecates any theory of his own origin and function, he is only obeying the instinct of self-preservation; for he knows very well that his past will not bear examination. He is heir to every superstition and by profession an apologist; his deepest vocation is to rescue, by some logical *tour de force*, what spontaneously he himself would have taken for a consecrated error. Zeal, here as in so many cases, becomes the cover and evidence of a bad conscience. Bigotry and craft, with a rhetorical vilification of enemies, then come to reinforce in the prophet that natural limitation of his interests which turns his face away from history and criticism; until his system, in its monstrous unreality and disingenuousness, becomes intolerable, and provokes a general revolt in which too often the truth of it is buried with the error in a common oblivion.

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UNJUST JUDGMENTS

Injustice in this world is not something comparative; the wrong is deep, clear, and absolute in each private fate. A bruised child wailing in the street, his small world for the moment utterly black and cruel before him, does not fetch his unhappiness from sophisticated comparisons or irrational envy; nor can any compensations and celestial harmonies supervening later ever expunge or justify that moment's bitterness. The pain may be whistled away and forgotten; the mind may be rendered by it only a

little harder, a little coarser, a little more secretive and sullen and familiar with unrightable wrong. But ignoring that pain will not prevent its having existed; it must remain for ever to trouble God's omniscience and be a part of that hell which the creation too truly involves.

If all unfortunate people could be proved to be unconscious automata, what a brilliant justification that would be for the ways of both God and man! Philosophy would not lack arguments to support such an agreeable conclusion. Beginning with the axiom that whatever is is right, a metaphysician might adduce the truth that consciousness is something self-existent and indubitably real; therefore, he would contend, it must be self-justifying and indubitably good. And he might continue by saying that a slave's life was not its own excuse for being, nor were the labours of a million drudges otherwise justified than by the conveniences which they supplied their masters with. *Ergo*, those servile operations could come to consciousness only where they attained their end, and the world could contain nothing but perfect and universal happiness. A divine omniscience and joy, shared by finite minds in so far as they might attain perfection, would be the only life in existence, and the notion that such a thing as pain, sorrow, or hatred could exist at all would forthwith vanish like the hideous and ridiculous illusion that it was. This argument may be recommended to apologetic writers as no weaker than those they commonly rely on, and infinitely more consoling.

The value which the world has in the eyes of its inhabitants is necessarily mixed, so that a sweeping optimism or pessimism can be only a theoretic pose, false to the natural sentiment even of those who assume it. Both are impressionistic judgments passed on the world at large, not perhaps without some impertinence. However good or however bad the universe may be, it is always worth while to make it better. But metaphysicians sometimes so define the good as to make it a matter of no importance; not seldom they give that name to the sum of all evils.

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MODERN POETRY

It is an observation at first sight melancholy but in the end, perhaps, enlightening, that the earliest poets are the most ideal, and that primitive ages furnish the most heroic characters and have the clearest vision of a perfect life. The Homeric times must have been full of ignorance and suffering. In those little barbaric towns, in those camps and farms, in those shipyards, there must have been much insecurity and superstition. That age was singularly poor in all that concerns the convenience of life and the entertainment of the mind with arts and sciences. Yet it had a sense for civilization. That machinery of life which men were beginning to devise appealed to them as poetical; they knew its ultimate justification and studied its incipient processes with delight. The poetry of that simple and ignorant age was, accordingly, the sweetest and sanest that the world has known; the most faultless in taste, and the most even and lofty in inspiration. Without lacking variety and homeliness, it bathed all things human in the golden light of morning; it clothed sorrow in a kind of majesty, instinct with both self-control and heroic frankness. Nowhere else can we find so noble a rendering of human nature, so spontaneous a delight in life, so uncompromising a dedication to beauty, and such a gift of seeing beauty in everything. Homer, the first of poets, was also the best and the most poetical.

From this beginning, if we look down the history of occidental literature, we see the power of idealization steadily decline. For while it finds here and there, as in Dante, a more spiritual theme and a subtler and riper intellect, it pays for that advantage by a more than equivalent loss in breadth, sanity, and happy vigour. And if ever imagination bursts out with a greater potency, as in Shakespeare (who excels the patriarch of poetry in depth of passion and vividness of characterization, and in those exquisite bubblings of poetry and humour in which

English genius is at its best), yet Shakespeare also pays the price by a notable loss in taste, in sustained inspiration, in consecration, and in rationality. There is more or less rubbish in his greatest works. When we come down to our own day we find poets of hardly less natural endowment (for in endowment all ages are perhaps alike) and with vastly richer sources of inspiration; for they have many arts and literatures behind them, with the spectacle of a varied and agitated society, a world which is the living microcosm of its own history and presents in one picture many races, arts, and religions. Our poets have more wonderful tragedies of the imagination to depict than had Homer, whose world was innocent of any essential defeat, or Dante, who believed in the world's definitive redemption. Or, if perhaps their inspiration is comic, they have the pageant of mediæval manners, with its picturesque artifices and passionate fancies, and the long comedy of modern social revolutions, so illusory in their aims and so productive in their aimlessness. They have, moreover, the new and marvellous conception which natural science has given us of the world and of the conditions of human progress.

With all these lessons of experience behind them, however, we find our contemporary poets incapable of any high wisdom, incapable of any imaginative rendering of human life and its meaning. Our poets are things of shreds and patches; they give us episodes and studies, a sketch of this curiosity, a glimpse of that romance; they have no total vision, no grasp of the whole reality, and consequently no capacity for a sane and steady idealization. This age of material elaboration has no sense for perfection. Its fancy is retrospective, whimsical, and flickering; its ideals, when it has any, are negative and partial; its moral strength is a blind and miscellaneous vehemence. Its poetry, in a word, is the poetry of barbarism.

This poetry should be viewed in relation to the general moral crisis and imaginative disintegration of which it gives a verbal echo; then we shall avoid the injustice of passing it over as insignificant, no less than the imbecility of hailing it as essentially glorious and successful. We must remember that the imagination of our race has been subject to a double discipline. It has been formed partly

in the school of classic literature and polity, and partly in the school of Christian piety. This duality of inspiration, this contradiction between the two accepted methods of rationalizing the world, has been a chief source of that incoherence, that romantic indistinctness and imperfection, which largely characterize the products of the modern arts. A man cannot serve two masters; yet the conditions have not been such as to allow him wholly to despise the one or wholly to obey the other. To be wholly pagan is impossible after the dissolution of that civilization which had seemed universal, and that empire which had believed itself eternal. To be wholly Christian is impossible for a similar reason, now that the illusion and cohesion of Christian ages is lost, and for the further reason that Christianity was itself fundamentally eclectic. Before it could succeed and dominate men even for a time, it was obliged to adjust itself to reality, to incorporate many elements of pagan wisdom, and to accommodate itself to many habits and passions at variance with its own ideal.

In these latter times, with the prodigious growth of material life in elaboration and of mental life in diffusion, there has supervened upon this old dualism a new faith in man's absolute power, a kind of return to the inexperience and self-assurance of youth. This new inspiration has made many minds indifferent to the two traditional disciplines; neither is seriously accepted by them, for the reason, excellent from their own point of view, that no discipline whatever is needed. The memory of ancient disillusions has faded with time. Ignorance of the past has bred contempt for the lessons which the past might teach. Men prefer to repeat the old experiment without knowing that they repeat it.

73

THE UNHAPPINESS OF ARTISTS

So long as happiness is conceived as a poet might conceive it, namely, in its immediately sensuous and emotional factors, so long as we live in the moment and

make our happiness consist in the simplest things,—in breathing, seeing, hearing, loving, and sleeping,—our happiness has the same substance, the same elements, as our æsthetic delight, for it is æsthetic delight that makes our happiness. Yet poets and artists, with their immediate and æsthetic joys, are not thought to be happy men; they themselves are apt to be loud in their lamentations, and to regard themselves as eminently and tragically unhappy. This arises from the intensity and inconstancy of their emotions, from their improvidence, and from the eccentricity of their social habits. While among them the sensuous and vital functions have the upper hand, the gregarious and social instincts are subordinated and often deranged; and their unhappiness consists in the sense of their unfitness to live in the world into which they are born.

But man is pre-eminently a political animal, and social needs are almost as fundamental in him as vital functions, and often more conscious. Friendship, wealth, reputation, power, and influence, when added to family life, constitute surely the main elements of happiness. Now these are only very partially composed of definite images. The desire for them, the consciousness of their absence or possession, comes upon us only when we reflect, when we are planning, considering the future, gathering the words of others, rehearsing their scorn or admiration for ourselves, conceiving possible situations in which our virtue, our fame or power would become conspicuous, comparing our lot with that of others, and going through other discursive processes of thought. If artists and poets are unhappy, it is after all because happiness does not interest them. They cannot seriously pursue it, because its components are not components of beauty, and being in love with beauty, they neglect and despise those unæsthetic social virtues in the operation of which happiness is found. On the other hand those who pursue happiness conceived merely in abstract and conventional terms, as money, success, or respectability, often miss that real and fundamental part of happiness which flows from the senses and imagination. This element is what the love of beauty can add to life; for beauty can also be a cause and a factor of

happiness. Yet the happiness of loving beauty is either too sensuous to be stable, or else too ultimate, too sacramental, to be accounted happiness by the worldly mind.

74

POETRY OF LATIN PEOPLES

Every Italian of culture in the days of the Renaissance was in the habit of addressing little pieces to his friends, and of casting his thoughts or his prayers into the mould of a sonnet or a madrigal. Verse has a greater naturalness and a wider range among the Latin peoples than among the English; poetry and prose are less differentiated. In French, Italian, and Spanish, as in Latin itself, elegance and neatness of expression suffice for verse. The reader passes without any sense of incongruity or anti-climax from passion to reflection, from sentiment to satire, from flights of fancy to homely details: the whole has a certain human sincerity and intelligibility which weld it together. As the Latin languages are not composed of two diverse elements, as English is of Latin and German, so the Latin mind does not have two spheres of sentiment, one vulgar and the other sublime. All changes are variations on a single key, which is the key of intelligence. We must not be surprised, therefore, to find now a message to a friend, now an artistic maxim, now a bit of dialectic, and now a confession of sin, taking the form of verse and filling out the fourteen lines of a sonnet. On the contrary, we must look to these familiar compositions for the most genuine evidence of a man's daily thoughts.

75

DANTE

Dante, gifted with the tenderest sense of colour, and the firmest art of design, has put his whole world into his canvas. Seen there, that world becomes complete, clear,

beautiful, and tragic. It is vivid and truthful in its detail, sublime in its march and in its harmony. This is not poetry where the parts are better than the whole. Here, as in some great symphony, everything is cumulative: the movements conspire, the tension grows, the volume redoubles, the keen melody soars higher and higher; and it all ends, not with a bang, not with some casual incident, but in sustained reflection, in the sense that it has not ended, but remains by us in its totality, a revelation and a resource for ever. It has taught us to love and to renounce, to judge and to worship. What more could a poet do? Dante poetized all life and nature as he found them. His imagination dominated and focussed the whole world. He thereby touched the ultimate goal to which a poet can aspire; he set the standard for all possible performance, and became the type of a supreme poet. This is not to say that he is the "greatest" of poets. The relative merit of poets is a barren thing to wrangle about. The question can always be opened anew, when a critic appears with a fresh temperament or a new criterion. Even less need we say that no greater poet can ever arise; we may be confident of the opposite. But Dante gives a successful example of the *highest species* of poetry. His poetry covers the whole field from which poetry may be fetched, and to which poetry may be applied, from the inmost recesses of the heart to the uttermost bounds of nature and of destiny. If to give imaginative value to something is the minimum task of a poet, to give imaginative value to all things, and to the system which things compose, is evidently his greatest task.

Dante fulfilled this task, of course under special conditions and limitations, personal and social; but he fulfilled it, and he thereby fulfilled the conditions of supreme poetry. Even Homer, as we are beginning to perceive nowadays, suffered from a certain conventionality and one-sidedness. There was much in the life and religion of his time that his art ignored. It was a flattering, a euphemistic art; it had a sort of pervasive blandness, like that which we now associate with a fashionable sermon. It was poetry addressed to the ruling caste in the state, to the conquerors; and it spread an intentional glamour over

their past brutalities and present self-deceptions. No such partiality in Dante; he paints what he hates as frankly as what he loves, and in all things he is complete and sincere. Yet if any similar adequacy is attained again by any poet, it will not be, presumably, by a poet of the supernatural. Henceforth, for any wide and honest imagination, the supernatural must figure as an idea in the human mind,—a part of the natural. To conceive it otherwise would be to fall short of the insight of this age, not to express or to complete it. Dante, however, for this very reason, may be expected to remain the supreme poet of the supernatural, the unrivalled exponent, after Plato, of that phase of thought and feeling in which the supernatural seems to be the key to nature and to happiness. This is the hypothesis on which, as yet, moral unity has been best attained in this world. Here, then, we have the most complete idealization and comprehension of things achieved by mankind hitherto. Dante is the type of a consummate poet.

76

ABSENCE OF RELIGION IN SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare could be idealistic when he dreamed, as he could be spiritual when he reflected. The spectacle of life did not pass before his eyes as a mere phantasmagoria. He seized upon its principles; he became wise. Nothing can exceed the ripeness of his seasoned judgment, or the occasional breadth, sadness, and terseness of his reflection. The author of *Hamlet* could not be without metaphysical aptitude; *Macbeth* could not have been written without a sort of sibylline inspiration, or the Sonnets without something of the Platonic mind. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that we should have to search through all the works of Shakespeare to find half-a-dozen passages that have so much as a religious sound, and that even these passages, upon examination, should prove not to be the expression of any deep religious conception. If Shakespeare had been without metaphysical capacity,

or without moral maturity, we could have explained his strange insensibility to religion; but as it is, we must marvel at his indifference and ask ourselves what can be the causes of it. For, even if we should not regard the absence of religion as an imperfection in his own thought, we must admit it to be an incompleteness in his portrayal of the thought of others. Positivism may be a virtue in a philosopher, but it is a vice in a dramatist, who has to render those human passions to which the religious imagination has always given a larger meaning and a greater depth.

Those poets by whose side we are accustomed to put Shakespeare did not forgo this advantage. They gave us man with his piety and the world with its gods. Homer is the chief repository of the Greek religion, and Dante the faithful interpreter of the Catholic. Nature would have been inconceivable to them without the supernatural, or man without the influence and companionship of the gods. These poets live in a cosmos. In their minds, as in the mind of their age, the fragments of experience have fallen together into a perfect picture, like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope. Their universe is a total. Reason and imagination have mastered it completely and peopled it. No chaos remains beyond, or, if it does, it is thought of with an involuntary shudder that soon passes into a healthy indifference. They have a theory of human life; they see man in his relations, surrounded by a kindred universe in which he fills his allotted place. He knows the meaning and issue of his life, and does not voyage without a chart.

Shakespeare's world, on the contrary, is only the world of human society. The cosmos eludes him; he does not seem to feel the need of framing that idea. He depicts human life in all its richness and variety, but leaves that life without a setting, and consequently without a meaning. If we asked him to tell us what is the significance of the passion and beauty he had so vividly displayed, and what is the outcome of it all, he could hardly answer in any other words than those he puts into the mouth of Macbeth :—

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

How differently would Homer or Dante have answered that question! Their tragedy would have been illumined by a sense of the divinity of life and beauty, or by a sense of the sanctity of suffering and death. Their faith had enveloped the world of experience in a world of imagination, in which the ideals of the reason, of the fancy, and of the heart had a natural expression. They had caught in the reality the hint of a lovelier fable,—a fable in which that reality was completed and idealized, and made at once vaster in its extent and more intelligible in its principle. They had, as it were, dramatized the universe, and endowed it with the tragic unities. In contrast with such a luminous philosophy and so well-digested an experience, the silence of Shakespeare and his philosophical incoherence have something in them that is still heathen; something that makes us wonder whether the northern mind, even in him, did not remain morose and barbarous at its inmost core.

77

ROMANTIC IGNORANCE OF SELF

NOTHING is further from the common people than the corrupt desire to be primitive. They instinctively look toward a more exalted life, which they imagine to be full of distinction and pleasure, and the idea of that brighter existence fills them with hope or with envy or with humble admiration. But a barbarous ideal requires tasks and dangers incompatible with happiness; a rude and oppressed conscience is incapable of regarding as good a state which excludes its own acrid satisfactions.

The purpose of education is to free us from these

prejudices. For the barbarian is the man who regards his passions as their own excuse for being; who does not domesticate them either by understanding their cause or by conceiving their ideal goal. He is the man who does not know his derivations nor perceive his tendencies, but who merely feels and acts, valuing in his life its force and its filling, but being careless of its purpose and its form. His delight is in abundance and vehemence; his art, like his life, shows an exclusive respect for quantity and splendour of materials. His scorn for what is poorer and weaker than himself is only surpassed by his ignorance of what is higher.

To frame solid ideals, which would, in fact, be better than actual things, is not granted to the merely irritable poet; it is granted only to the master-workman, to the modeller of some given substance to some given use—things which define his aspiration, and separate what is relevant and glorious in his dreams from that large part of them which is merely ignorant and peevish. In romantic drama, accidents make the meaningless happiness or unhappiness of a supersensitive adventurer. Chivalry is a fine emblazoning of the original manly impulse to fight every man and love every woman. Something drives the youth afield, into solitude, into alien friendships; only in the face of nature and an indifferent world can he become himself. Such a flight from home and all its pieties grows more urgent when there is some real conflict of temper or conscience between the young man and what is established in his family; and this happens often because, after all, the most beneficent conventions are but mechanisms which must ignore the nicer sensibilities and divergences of living souls. Common men accept these spiritual tyrannies, weak men repine at them, and great men break them down.

78

THE BARBARIAN

The picture of life as an eternal war for illusory ends was drawn at first by satirists, unhappily with too much justification in the facts. Some grosser minds, too

undisciplined to have ever pursued a good either truly attainable or truly satisfactory, then proceeded to mistake that satire on human folly for a sober account of the whole universe ; and finally others were not ashamed to represent it as the ideal itself—so soon is the dyer's hand subdued to what it works in. A barbarous mind cannot conceive life, like health, as a harmony continually preserved or restored, and containing those natural and ideal activities which disease merely interrupts. Such a mind, never having tasted order, cannot conceive it, and identifies progress with new conflicts and life with continual death. Its deification of unreason, instability, and strife comes partly from piety and partly from inexperience. There is piety in saluting nature in her perpetual flux and in thinking that since no equilibrium is maintained for ever none, perhaps, deserves to be. There is inexperience in not considering that wherever interests and judgments exist, the natural flux has fallen, so to speak, into a vortex, and created a natural good, a cumulative life, and an ideal purpose. Art, science, government, human nature itself, are self-defining and self-preserving : by partly fixing a structure they fix an ideal. But the barbarian can hardly regard such things, for to have distinguished and fostered them would be to have founded a civilization.

To confuse means with ends and mistake disorder for vitality is not unnatural to minds that hear the hum of mighty workings but can imagine neither the cause nor the fruits of that portentous commotion. All functions, in such chaotic lives, seem instrumental functions. It is then supposed that what serves no further purpose can have no value, and that he who suffers no effuscation can have no feeling and no life. To attain an ideal seems to destroy its worth. Moral life, at that low level, is a fantastic game only, not having come in sight of humane and liberal interests. The barbarian's intensity is without seriousness and his passion without joy. His philosophy, which means to glorify all experience and to digest all vice, is in truth an expression of pathetic innocence. It betrays a rudimentary impulse to follow every beckoning hand, to assume that no adventure and no bewitchment can be anything but glorious. Such an attitude is intelligible in one

who has never seen anything worth seeing nor loved anything worth loving. Immaturity could go no further than to acknowledge no limits defining will and happiness. When such limits, however, are gradually discovered and an authoritative ideal is born of the marriage of human nature with experience, happiness becomes at once definite and attainable; for adjustment is possible to a world that has a fruitful and intelligible structure.

Such incoherences, which might well arise in ages without traditions, may be preserved and fostered by superstition. Perpetual servile employments and subjection to an irrational society may render people incapable even of conceiving a liberal life. They may come to think their happiness no longer separable from their misery and to fear the large emptiness, as they deem it, of a happy world. Like the prisoner of Chillon, after so long a captivity, they would regain their freedom with a sigh. The wholesome influences of nature, however, would soon revive their wills, contorted by unnatural oppression, and a vision of perfection would arise within them upon breathing a purer air. Freedom and perfection are synonymous with life. The peace they bring is one

> whose names are also rapture, power,
> Clear sight, and love; for these are parts of peace.

79

ROMANTICISM

THE romantic poet is a novelist in verse. He is a philosopher of experience as it comes to the individual; the philosopher of life, as action, memory, or soliloquy may put life before each of us in turn. Now the zest of romanticism consists in taking what you know is an independent and ancient world as if it were material for your private emotions. The savage or the animal, who should not be aware of nature or history at all, could not be romantic about them, nor about himself. He would be blandly idiotic, and take everything quite unsuspectingly

for what it was in him. The romanticist, then, should be a civilized man, so that his primitiveness and egotism may have something paradoxical and conscious about them; and so that his life may contain a rich experience, and his reflection may play with all varieties of sentiment and thought. At the same time, in his inmost genius, he should be a barbarian, a child, a transcendentalist, so that his life may seem to him absolutely fresh, self-determined, unforeseen, and unforeseeable. It is part of his inspiration to believe that he creates a new heaven and a new earth with each revolution in his moods or in his purposes. He ignores, or seeks to ignore, all the conditions of life, until perhaps by living he personally discovers them. Like Faust, he flouts science, and is minded to make trial of magic, which renders a man's will master of the universe in which he seems to live. He disowns all authority, save that mysteriously exercised over him by his deep faith in himself. He is always honest and brave; but he is always different, and absolves himself from his past as soon as he has outgrown or forgotten it. He is inclined to be wayward and foolhardy, justifying himself on the ground that all experience is interesting, that the springs of it are inexhaustible and always pure, and that the future of his soul is infinite. In the romantic hero the civilized man and the barbarian must be combined; he should be the heir to all civilization, and, nevertheless, he should take life arrogantly and egotistically, as if it were an absolute personal experiment.

The great merit of the romantic attitude in poetry, and of the transcendental method in philosophy, is that they put us back at the beginning of our experience. They disintegrate convention, which is often cumbrous and confused, and restore us to ourselves, to immediate perception and primordial will. That, as it would seem, is the true and inevitable starting-point. Had we not been born, had we not peeped into this world, each out of his personal eggshell, this world might indeed have existed without us, as a thousand undiscoverable worlds may now exist; but for us it would not have existed. This obvious truth would not need to be insisted on but for two reasons: one that conventional knowledge, such as our notions of

science and morality afford, is often top-heavy ; it asserts and imposes on us much more than our experience warrants, —our experience, which is our only approach to reality. The other reason is the reverse or counterpart of this ; for conventional knowledge often ignores and seems to suppress parts of experience no less actual and important for us than those parts on which the conventional knowledge itself is reared. The public world is too narrow for the soul, as well as too mythical and fabulous. Hence the double critical labour and reawakening which romantic reflection is good for,—to cut off the dead branches and feed the starving shoots. This philosophy, as Kant said, is a cathartic : it is purgative and liberating ; it is intended to make us start afresh and start right.

It follows that one who has no sympathy with such a philosophy is a comparatively conventional person. He has a second-hand mind. It follows, also, however, that one who has no philosophy but this has no wisdom ; he can say nothing that is worth carrying away ; everything in him is attitude and nothing is achievement. Words of wisdom diversify this career of folly, as exquisite scenes fill this tortuous and overloaded drama. The mind has become free and sincere, but it has remained bewildered.

The literary merits of romanticism correspond accurately with its philosophical excellences. In the prologue to Faust, Goethe has described them ; much scenery, much wisdom, some folly, great wealth of incident and characterization ; and behind, the soul of a poet singing with all sincerity and fervour the visions of his life. Here is profundity, inwardness, honesty, waywardness ; here are the most touching accents of nature, and the most varied assortment of curious lore and grotesque fancies. This work, says Goethe, is like human life : it has a beginning, it has an end ; but it has no totality, it is not one whole. How, indeed, should we draw the sum of an infinite experience that is without conditions to determine it, and without goals in which it terminates ? Evidently all a poet of pure experience can do is to represent some snatches of it, more or less prolonged ; and the more prolonged the experience represented is the more it will be a collection of snatches, and the less the last part of it will have to do with

the beginning. Any character which we may attribute to the whole of what we have surveyed would fail to dominate it, if that whole had been larger, and if we had had memory or foresight enough to include other parts of experience differing altogether in kind from the episodes we happen to have lived through. To be miscellaneous, to be indefinite, to be unfinished, is essential to the romantic life. May we not say that it is essential to all life, in its immediacy; and that only in reference to what is not life—to objects, ideals, and unanimities that cannot be experienced but may only be conceived—can life become rational and truly progressive? Herein we may see the radical and inalienable excellence of romanticism; its sincerity, freedom, richness, and infinity. Herein, too, we may see its limitations, in that it cannot fix or trust any of its ideals, and blindly believes the universe to be as wayward as itself, so that nature and art are always slipping through its fingers. It is obstinately empirical, and will never learn anything from experience.

80

THE POLITICS OF FAUST

We should expect Faust, who had lain in the lap of absolute beauty, to understand its nature. We should expect him, in eager search after perfection, to establish his state on the distinction between the better and the worse,—a distinction never to be abolished or obscured for one who has loved beauty. In other words, he might have established a moral society, founding it on great renunciations and on enlightened heroisms, so that the highest beauty might really come down and dwell within that city. But we find nothing of the sort. Faust founds his kingdom because he must do something; and his only ideal of what he hopes to secure for his subjects is that they shall always have something to do. Thus the will to live, in Faust, is not in the least educated by his experience. It changes its objects because it must; the passions of youth yield to those of age; and among all the illusions of his life the most fatuous is the illusion of progress.

It is characteristic of the absolute romantic spirit that when it has finished with something it must invent a new interest. It beats the bush for fresh game; it is always on the verge of being utterly bored. So now that Helen is flown, Mephistopheles must come to the rescue, like an amiable nurse, and propose all sorts of pastimes. Frankfort, Leipzig, Paris, Versailles, are described, with the entertainments that life there might afford; but Faust, who was always *difficile*, has been rendered more so by his recent splendid adventures. However, a new impulse suddenly arises in his breast. From the mountain-top to which Helen's mantle has borne him, he can see the German Ocean, with its tides daily covering great stretches of the flat shore, and rendering them brackish and uninhabitable. It would be a fine thing to reclaim those wastes, to plant there a prosperous population. After Greece, Faust has a vision of Holland.

This last ambition of Faust's is as romantic as the others. He feels the prompting towards political art, as he had felt the prompting towards love or beauty. The notion of transforming things by his will, of leaving for ages his mark upon nature and upon human society, fascinates him; but this passion for activity and power, which some simple-minded commentators dignify with the name of altruism and of living for others, has no steady purpose or standard about it. Goethe is especially lavish in details to prove this point. Magic, the exercise of an unteachable will, is still Faust's instrument. Mephistopheles, by various arts of illusion, secures the triumph of the emperor in a desperate war which he is carrying on against a justifiable insurrection. As a reward for the aid rendered, Faust receives the shore marches in fief. The necessary dykes and canals are built by magic; the spirits that Mephistopheles commands dig and build them with strange incantations. The commerce that springs up is also illegitimate: piracy is involved in it.

Nor is this all. On some sand-dunes that diversified the original beach, an old man and his wife, Philemon and Baucis, lived before the advent of Faust and his improvements. On the hillock, besides their cottage, there stood a small chapel, with a bell which disturbed Faust in his

newly built palace, partly by its importunate sound, partly by its Christian suggestions, and partly by reminding him that he was not master of the country altogether, and that something existed in it not the product of his magical will. The old people would not sell out; and in a fit of impatience Faust orders that they should be evicted by force, and transferred to a better dwelling elsewhere. Mephistopheles and his minions execute these orders somewhat roughly: the cottage and chapel are set on fire, and Philemon and Baucis are consumed in the flames, or buried in the ruins.

Faust regrets this accident; but it is one of those inevitable developments of action which a brave man must face, and forget as soon as possible. He had regretted in the same way the unhappiness of Gretchen, and, presumably, the death of Euphorion; but such is romantic life. His will, though shaken, is not extinguished by such misadventures. He would continue, if life could last, doing things that, in some respect, he would be obliged to regret: but he would banish that regret easily, in the pursuit of some new interest, and, on the whole, he would not regret having been obliged to regret them. Otherwise, he would not have shared the whole experience of mankind, but missed the important experience of self-accusation and of self-recovery.

It is impossible to suppose that the citizens he is establishing behind leaky dykes, so that they may always have something to keep them busy, would have given him unmixed satisfaction if he could really have foreseen their career in its concrete details. Holland is an interesting country, but hardly a spectacle which would long entrance an idealist like Faust, so exacting that he has found the arts and sciences wholly vain, domesticity impossible, and kitchens and beer-cellars beneath consideration. The career of Faust himself had been far more free and active than that of his industrious burghers could ever hope to be. His interest in establishing them is a masterful, irresponsible interest. It is one more arbitrary passion, one more selfish illusion. As he had no conscience in his love, and sought and secured nobody's happiness, so he has no conscience in his ambition and in his political architecture;

but if only his will is done, he does not ask whether, judged by its fruits, it will be worth doing. As his immense dejection at the beginning, when he was a doctor in his laboratory, was not founded on any real misfortune, but on restlessness and a vague infinite ambition, so his ultimate satisfaction in his work is not founded on any good done, but on a passionate wilfulness. He calls the things he wants for others good, because he now wants to bestow it on them, not because they naturally want it for themselves. Incapable of sympathy, he has a momentary pleasure in policy; and in the last and "highest" expression of his will, in his statesmanship and supposed public spirit, he remains romantic and, if need be, aggressive and criminal.

81

EMERSON

If we ask ourselves what was Emerson's relation to the scientific and religious movements of his time, and what place he may claim in the history of opinion, we must answer that he belonged very little to the past, very little to the present, and almost wholly to that abstract sphere into which mystical or philosophic aspiration has carried a few men in all ages. The religious tradition in which he was reared was that of Puritanism, but of a Puritanism which, retaining its moral intensity and metaphysical abstraction, had minimized its doctrinal expression and become Unitarian. Emerson was indeed the Psyche of Puritanism, "the latest-born and fairest vision far" of all that "faded hierarchy." A Puritan whose religion was all poetry, a poet whose only pleasure was thought, he showed in his life and personality the meagreness, the constraint, the frigid and conscious consecration which belonged to his clerical ancestors, while his inmost impersonal spirit ranged abroad over the fields of history and nature, gathering what ideas it might, and singing its little snatches of inspired song.

The traditional element was thus rather an external and inessential contribution to Emerson's mind; he had the

professional tinge, the decorum, the distinction of an old-fashioned divine; he had also the habit of writing sermons, and he had the national pride and hope of a religious people that felt itself providentially chosen to establish a free and godly commonwealth in a new world. For the rest, he separated himself from the ancient creed of the community with a sense rather of relief than of regret. A literal belief in Christian doctrines repelled him as unspiritual, as manifesting no understanding of the meaning which, as allegories, those doctrines might have to a philosophic and poetical spirit. Although, being a clergyman, he was at first in the habit of referring to the Bible and its lessons as to a supreme authority, he had no instinctive sympathy with the inspiration of either the Old or the New Testament; in Hafiz or Plutarch, in Plato or Shakespeare, he found more congenial stuff.

While he thus preferred to withdraw, without rancour and without contempt, from the ancient fellowship of the church, he assumed an attitude hardly less cool and deprecatory toward the enthusiasms of the new era. The national ideal of democracy and freedom had his entire sympathy; he allowed himself to be drawn into the movement against slavery; he took a curious and smiling interest in the discoveries of natural science and in the material progress of the age. But he could go no further. His contemplative nature, his religious training, his dispersed reading, made him stand aside from the life of the world, even while he studied it with benevolent attention. His heart was fixed on eternal things, and he was in no sense a prophet for his age or country. He belonged by nature to that mystical company of devout souls that recognize no particular home and are dispersed throughout history, although not without intercommunication. He felt his affinity to the Hindoos and the Persians, to the Platonists and the Stoics. Yet he was a shrewd Yankee, by instinct on the winning side; he was a cheery, child-like soul, impervious to the evidence of evil, as of everything that it did not suit his transcendental individuality to appreciate or to notice. More, perhaps, than anybody that has ever lived, he practised the transcendental method in all its purity. He had no system. He opened his eyes

on the world every morning with a fresh sincerity, marking how things seemed to him then, or what they suggested to his spontaneous fancy. This fancy, for being spontaneous, was not always novel; it was guided by the habits and training of his mind, which were those of a preacher. Yet he never insisted on his notions so as to turn them into settled dogmas; he felt in his bones that they were myths. Sometimes, indeed, the bad example of other transcendentalists, less true than he to their method, or the pressing questions of unintelligent people, or the instinct we all have to think our ideas final, led him to the very verge of system-making; but he stopped short. Had he made a system out of his notion of compensation, or the over-soul, or spiritual laws, the result would have been as thin and forced as it is in other transcendental systems. But he coveted truth; and he returned to experience, to history, to poetry, to the natural science of his day, for new starting-points and hints toward fresh transcendental musings.

To covet truth is a very distinguished passion. Every philosopher says he is pursuing the truth, but this is seldom the case. As a philosopher has observed, one reason why philosophers often fail to reach the truth is that often they do not desire to reach it. Those who are genuinely concerned in discovering what happens to be true are rather the men of science, the naturalists, the historians; and ordinarily they discover it, according to their lights. The truths they find are never complete, and are not always important; but they are integral parts of the truth, facts and circumstances that help to fill in the picture, and that no later interpretation can invalidate or afford to contradict. But professional philosophers are usually only apologists: that is, they are absorbed in defending some vested illusion or some eloquent idea. Like lawyers or detectives, they study the case for which they are retained, to see how much evidence or semblance of evidence they can gather for the defence, and how much prejudice they can raise against the witnesses for the prosecution; for they know they are defending prisoners suspected by the world, and perhaps by their own good sense, of falsification. They do not covet truth, but victory and the dispelling of their own doubts. What they defend is some system,

that is, some view about the totality of things, of which men are actually ignorant. No system would have ever been framed if people had been simply interested in knowing what is true, whatever it may be. What produces systems is the interest in maintaining against all comers that some favourite or inherited idea of ours is sufficient and right. A system may contain an account of many things which, in detail, are true enough; but as a system, covering infinite possibilities that neither our experience nor our logic can prejudge, it must be a work of imagination and a piece of human soliloquy. It may be expressive of human experience, it may be poetical; but how should any one who really coveted truth suppose that it was true?

Emerson had no system; and his coveting truth had another exceptional consequence; he was detached, unworldly, contemplative. When he came out of the conventicle or the reform meeting, or out of the rapturous close atmosphere of the lecture-room, he heard nature whispering to him: "Why so hot, little sir?" No doubt the spirit or energy of the world is what is acting in us, as the sea is what rises in every little wave; but it passes through us, and cry out as we may, it will move on. Our privilege is to have perceived it as it moves. Our dignity is not in what we do, but in what we understand. The whole world is doing things. We are turning in that vortex; yet within us is silent observation, the speculative eye before which all passes, which bridges the distances and compares the combatants. On this side of his genius Emerson broke away from all conditions of age or country and represented nothing except intelligence itself.

There was another element in Emerson, curiously combined with transcendentalism, namely, his love and respect for nature. Nature, for the transcendentalist, is precious because it is his own work, a mirror in which he looks at himself and says (like a poet relishing his own verses), "What a genius I am! Who would have thought there was such stuff in me?" And the philosophical egotist finds in his doctrine a ready explanation of whatever beauty and commodity nature actually has. No

wonder, he says to himself, that nature is sympathetic, since I made it. And such a view, one-sided and even fatuous as it may be, undoubtedly sharpens the vision of a poet and a moralist to all that is inspiriting and symbolic in the natural world. Emerson was particularly ingenious and clear-sighted in feeling the spiritual uses of fellowship with the elements. This is something in which all Teutonic poetry is rich and which forms, I think, the most genuine and spontaneous part of modern taste, and especially of American taste. Just as some people are naturally enthralled and refreshed by music, so others are by landscape. Music and landscape make up the spiritual resources of those who cannot or dare not express their unfulfilled ideals in words. Serious poetry, profound religion (Calvinism, for instance), are the joys of an unhappiness that confesses itself; but when a genteel tradition forbids people to confess that they are unhappy, serious poetry and profound religion are closed to them by that; and since human life, in its depths, cannot then express itself openly, imagination is driven for comfort into abstract arts, where human circumstances are lost sight of, and human problems dissolve in a purer medium. The pressure of care is thus relieved, without its quietus being found in intelligence. To understand oneself is the classic form of consolation; to elude oneself is the romantic. In the presence of music or landscape human experience eludes itself; and thus romanticism is the bond between transcendental and naturalistic sentiment. The winds and clouds come to minister to the solitary ego.

82

SHELLEY

SHELLEY seems hardly to have been brought up; he grew up in the nursery among his young sisters, at school among the rude boys, without any affectionate guidance, without imbibing any religious or social tradition. If he received any formal training or correction, he instantly rejected it inwardly, set it down as unjust and absurd,

and turned instead to sailing paper boats, to reading romances or to writing them, or to watching with delight the magic of chemical experiments. Thus the mind of Shelley was thoroughly disinherited; but not, like the minds of most revolutionists, by accident and through the niggardliness of fortune, for few revolutionists would be such if they were heirs to a baronetcy. Shelley's mind disinherited itself out of allegiance to itself, because it was too sensitive and too highly endowed for the world into which it had descended. It rejected ordinary education, because it was incapable of assimilating it. Education is suitable to those few animals whose faculties are not completely innate, animals that, like most men, may be perfected by experience because they are born with various imperfect alternative instincts rooted equally in their system. But most animals, and a few men, are not of this sort. They cannot be educated, because they are born complete. Full of predeterminate intuitions, they are without intelligence, which is the power of seeing things as they are. Endowed with a specific, unshakable faith, they are impervious to experience: and as they burst the womb they bring ready-made with them their final and only possible system of philosophy.

Love of the ideal, passionate apprehension of what ought to be, has for its necessary counterpart condemnation of the actual, wherever the actual does not conform to that ideal. The spontaneous soul, the soul of the child, is naturally revolutionary; and when the revolution fails, the soul of the youth becomes naturally pessimistic. All moral life and moral judgment have this deeply romantic character; they venture to assert a private ideal in the face of an intractable and omnipotent world. Some moralists begin by feeling the attraction of untasted and ideal perfection. These, like Plato, excel in elevation, and they are apt to despise rather than to reform the world. Other moralists begin by a revolt against the actual, at some point where they find the actual particularly galling. These excel in sincerity; their purblind conscience is urgent, and they are reformers in intent and sometimes even in action. But the ideals they frame are fragmentary and shallow, often mere

provisional vague watchwords, like liberty, equality, and fraternity; they possess no positive visions or plans for moral life as a whole, like Plato's *Republic*.

Shelley was one of these spokesmen of the *a priori*, one of these nurslings of the womb, like a bee or a butterfly; a dogmatic, inspired, perfect, and incorrigible creature. He was innocent and cruel, swift and wayward, illuminated and blind. Being a finished child of nature, not a joint product, like most of us, of nature, history, and society, he abounded miraculously in his own clear sense, but was obtuse to the droll, miscellaneous lessons of fortune. The cannonade of hard, inexplicable facts that knocks into most of us what little wisdom we have left Shelley dazed and sore, perhaps, but uninstructed. When the storm was over, he began chirping again his own natural note. If the world continued to confine and beset him, he hated the world, and gasped for freedom. Being incapable of understanding reality, he revelled in creating world after world in idea. For his nature was not merely predetermined and obdurate, it was also sensitive, vehement, and fertile. With the soul of a bird, he had the senses of a man-child; the instinct of the butterfly was united in him with the instinct of the brooding fowl and of the pelican. This winged spirit had a heart. It darted swiftly on its appointed course, neither expecting nor understanding opposition; but when it met opposition it did not merely flutter and collapse; it was inwardly outraged, it protested proudly against fate, it cried aloud for liberty and justice.

The consequence was that Shelley, having a nature preformed but at the same time tender, passionate, and moral, was exposed to early and continual suffering. When the world violated the ideal which lay so clear before his eyes, that violation filled him with horror. If to the irrepressible gushing of life from within we add the suffering and horror that continually checked it, we shall have in hand, I think, the chief elements of his genius.

83

BROWNING

THE great dramatists have seldom dealt with perfectly virtuous characters. The great poets have seldom represented mythologies that would bear scientific criticism. But by an instinct which constituted their greatness they have cast these mixed materials furnished by life into forms congenial to the specific principles of their art, and by this transformation they have made acceptable in the æsthetic sphere things that in the sphere of reality were evil or imperfect: in a word, their works have been beautiful as works of art. Or, if their genius exceeded that of the technical poet and rose to prophetic intuition, they have known how to create ideal characters, not possessed, perhaps, of every virtue accidentally needed in this world, but possessed of what is ideally better, of internal greatness and perfection. They have also known how to select and reconstruct their mythology so as to make it a true interpretation of moral life. When we read the maxims of Iago, Falstaff, or Hamlet, we are delighted if the thought strikes us as true, but we are not less delighted if it strikes us as false. These characters are not presented to us in order to enlarge our capacities of passion nor in order to justify themselves as processes of redemption; they are there, clothed in poetry and imbedded in plot, to entertain us with their imaginable feelings and their interesting errors. Shakespeare, without being especially a philosopher, stands by virtue of his superlative genius on the plane of universal reason, far above the passionate experience which he overlooks and on which he reflects; and he raises us for the moment to his own level, to send us back again, if not better endowed for practical life, at least not unacquainted with speculation.

With Browning the case is essentially different. When his heroes are blinded by passion and warped by circumstance, as they almost always are, he does not describe the fact from the vantage-ground of the intellect and invite us to look at it from that point of view. On the

contrary, his art is all self-expression or satire. For the most part his hero, like Whitman's, is himself ; not appearing, as in the case of the American bard, *in puris naturalibus*, but masked in all sorts of historical and romantic finery. Sometimes, however, the personage, like Guido in " The Ring and the Book " or the " frustrate ghosts " of other poems, is merely a Marsyas, shown flayed and quivering to the greater glory of the poet's ideal Apollo. The impulsive utterances and the crudities of most of the speakers are passionately adopted by the poet as his own. He thus perverts what might have been a triumph of imagination into a failure of reason.

This circumstance has much to do with the fact that Browning, in spite of his extraordinary gift for expressing emotion, has hardly produced works purely and unconditionally delightful. They not only portray passion, which is interesting, but they betray it, which is odious. His art was still in the service of the will. He had not attained, in studying the beauty of things, that detachment of the phenomenon, that love of the form for its own sake, which is the secret of contemplative satisfaction. Therefore, the lamentable accidents of his personality and opinions, in themselves no worse than those of other mortals, passed into his art. He did not seek to elude them : he had no free speculative faculty to dominate them by. Or, to put the same thing differently, he was too much in earnest in his fictions, he threw himself too unreservedly into his creations. His imagination, like the imagination we have in dreams, was merely a vent for personal preoccupations. His art was inspired by purposes less simple and universal than the ends of imagination itself. His play of mind consequently could not be free or pure. The creative impulse could not reach its goal or manifest in any notable degree its own ingenuous ideal.

Browning, who had not had the education traditional in his own country, used to say that Italy had been his university. But it was a school for which he was ill prepared, and he did not sit under its best teachers. For the superficial ferment, the worldly passions, and the crimes of the Italian Renaissance he had a keen interest and intelligence. But Italy has been always a civilized

country, and beneath the trappings and suits of civilization which at that particular time it flaunted so gaily, it preserved a civilized heart to which Browning's insight could never penetrate. There subsisted in the best minds a trained imagination and a cogent ideal of virtue. Italy had a religion, and that religion permeated all its life, and was the background without which even its secular art and secular passions would not be truly intelligible. The most commanding and representative, the deepest and most appealing of Italian natures are permeated with this religious inspiration. A Saint Francis, a Dante, a Michael Angelo, breathe hardly anything else. Yet for Browning these men and what they represented may be said not to have existed. He saw, he studied, and he painted a decapitated Italy. His vision could not mount so high as her head.

One of the elements of that higher tradition which Browning was not prepared to imbibe was the idealization of love. The passion he represents is lava hot from the crater, in no way moulded, smelted, or refined. He had no thought of subjugating impulses into the harmony of reason. He did not master life, but was mastered by it. Accordingly the love he describes has no wings; it issues in nothing. His lovers "extinguish sight and speech, each on each"; sense, as he says elsewhere, drowning soul. The man in the gondola may well boast that he can die; it is the only thing he can properly do. Death is the only solution of a love that is tied to its individual object and inseparable from the alloy of passion and illusion within itself. Browning's hero, because he has loved intensely, says that he has lived; he would be right, if the significance of life were to be measured by the intensity of the feeling it contained, and if intelligence were not the highest form of vitality. But had that hero known how to love better and had he had enough spirit to dominate his love, he might perhaps have been able to carry away the better part of it and to say that he could not die; for one half of himself and of his love would have been dead already and the other half would have been eternal, having fed—

> On death, that feeds on men;
> And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

The irrationality of the passions which Browning glorifies, making them the crown of life, is so gross that at times he cannot help perceiving it.

> How perplexed
> Grows belief! Well, this cold clay clod
> Was man's heart:
> Crumble it, and what comes next? Is it God?

Yes, he will tell us. These passions and follies, however desperate in themselves and however vain for the individual, are excellent as parts of the dispensation of Providence:—

> Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
> It forwards the general deed of man,
> And each of the many helps to recruit
> The life of the race by a general plan,
> Each living his own to boot.

If we doubt, then, the value of our own experience, even perhaps of our experience of love, we may appeal to the interdependence of goods and evils in the world to assure ourselves that, in view of its consequences elsewhere, this experience was great and important after all. We need not stop to consider this supposed solution, which bristles with contradictions; it would not satisfy Browning himself, if he did not back it up with something more to his purpose, something nearer to warm and transitive feeling. The compensation for our defeats, the answer to our doubts, is not to be found merely in a proof of the essential necessity and perfection of the universe; that would be cold comfort, especially to so uncontemplative a mind. No: that answer and compensation are to come very soon and very vividly to every private bosom. There is another life, a series of other lives, for this to happen in. Death will come, and—

> I shall thereupon
> Take rest, ere I be gone
> Once more on my adventure brave and new,
> Fearless and unperplexed,
> When I wage battle next,
> What weapons to select, what armour to endue.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again
And with God be the rest!

Into this conception of continued life Browning has put all the items furnished by fancy or tradition which at the moment satisfied his imagination—new adventures, reunion with friends, and even, after a severe strain and for a short while, a little peace and quiet. The gist of the matter is that we are to live indefinitely, that all our faults can be turned to good, all our unfinished business settled, and that therefore there is time for anything we like in this world and for all we need in the other. It is in spirit the direct opposite of the philosophic maxim of regarding the end, of taking care to leave a finished life and a perfect character behind us. It is the opposite, also, of the religious *memento mori*, of the warning that the time is short before we go to our account. According to Browning, there is no account: we have an infinite credit. With an unconscious and characteristic mixture of heathen instinct with Christian doctrine, he thinks of the other world as heaven, but of the life to be led there as of the life of nature.

Aristotle observes that we do not think the business of life worthy of the gods, to whom we can only attribute contemplation; if Browning had had the idea of perfecting and rationalizing this life rather than of continuing it indefinitely, he would have followed Aristotle and the church in this matter. But he had no idea of anything eternal; and so he gave, as he would probably have said, a filling to the empty Christian immortality by making every man busy in it about many things. And to the irrational man, to the boy, it is no unpleasant idea to have an infinite number of days to live through, an infinite number of dinners to eat, with an infinity of fresh fights and new love-affairs, and no end of last rides together.

But it is a mere euphemism to call this perpetual

vagrancy a development of the soul. A development means the unfolding of a definite nature, the gradual manifestation of a known idea. A series of phases, like the successive leaps of a waterfall, is no development. And Browning has no idea of an intelligible good which the phases of life might approach and with reference to which they might constitute a progress. His notion is simply that the game of life, the exhilaration of action, is inexhaustible. You may set up your tenpins again after you have bowled them over, and you may keep up the sport for ever. The point is to bring them down as often as possible with a master-stroke and a big bang. That will tend to invigorate in you that self-confidence which in this system passes for faith. But it is unmeaning to call such an exercise heaven, or to talk of being " with God " in such a life, in any sense in which we are not with God already and under all circumstances. Our destiny would rather be, as Browning himself expresses it in a phrase which Attila or Alaric might have composed, " bound dizzily to the wheel of change to slake the thirst of God."

Such an optimism and such a doctrine of immortality can give no justification to experience which it does not already have in its detached parts. Indeed, those dogmas are not the basis of Browning's attitude, not conditions of his satisfaction in living, but rather overflowings of that satisfaction. The present life is presumably a fair average of the whole series of " adventures brave and new " which fall to each man's share ; were it not found delightful in itself, there would be no motive for imagining and asserting that it is reproduced *in infinitum*. So too if we did not think that the evil in experience is actually utilized and visibly swallowed up in its good effects, we should hardly venture to think that God could have regarded as a good something which has evil for its condition and which is for that reason profoundly sad and equivocal. But Browning's philosophy of life and habit of imagination do not require the support of any metaphysical theory. His temperament is perfectly self-sufficient and primary ; what doctrines he has are suggested by it and are too loose to give it more than a hesitant expression ; they are

quite powerless to give it any justification which it might lack on its face.

It is the temperament, then, that speaks; we may brush aside as unsubstantial, and even as distorting, the web of arguments and theories which it has spun out of itself. And what does the temperament say? That life is an adventure, not a discipline; that the exercise of energy is the absolute good, irrespective of motives or of consequences. These are the maxims of a frank barbarism; nothing could express better the lust of life, the dogged unwillingness to learn from experience, the contempt for rationality, the carelessness about perfection, the admiration for mere force, in which barbarism always betrays itself. The vague religion which seeks to justify this attitude is really only another outburst of the same irrational impulse.

In Browning this religion takes the name of Christianity, and identifies itself with one or two Christian ideas arbitrarily selected; but at heart it has far more affinity to the worship of Thor or of Odin than to the religion of the Cross. The zest of life becomes a cosmic emotion; we lump the whole together and cry, "Hurrah for the Universe!" A faith which is thus a pure matter of lustiness and inebriation rises and falls, attracts or repels, with the ebb and flow of the mood from which it springs. It is invincible because unseizable; it is as safe from refutation as it is rebellious to embodiment. But it cannot enlighten or correct the passions on which it feeds. Like a servile priest, it flatters them in the name of Heaven. It cloaks irrationality in sanctimony; and its admiration for every bluff folly, being thus justified by a theory, becomes a positive fanaticism, eager to defend any wayward impulse.

84

NIETZSCHE

NIETZSCHE was personally more philosophical than his philosophy. His talk about power, harshness, and superb immorality was the hobby of a harmless young scholar

and constitutional invalid. He did not crave in the least either wealth or empire. What he loved was solitude, nature, music, books. But his imagination, like his judgment, was captious; it could not dwell on reality, but reacted furiously against it. Accordingly, when he speaks of the will to be powerful, power is merely an eloquent word on his lips. It symbolizes the escape from mediocrity. What power would be when attained and exercised remains entirely beyond his horizon. What meets us everywhere is the sense of impotence and a passionate rebellion against it.

That there is no God is proved by Nietzsche pragmatically, on the ground that belief in the existence of God would have made him uncomfortable. Not at all for the reason that might first occur to us: to imagine himself a lost soul has always been a point of pride with the romantic genius. The reason was that if there had been any gods he would have found it intolerable not to be a god himself. Poor Nietzsche! The laurels of the Almighty would not let him sleep.

It is hard to know if we should be more deceived in taking these sallies seriously or in not taking them so. On the one hand it all seems the swagger of an immature, half-playful mind, like a child that tells you he will cut your head off. The dreamy impulse, in its inception, is sincere enough, but there is no vestige of any understanding of what it proposes, of its conditions, or of its results. On the other hand these explosions are symptomatic; there stirs behind them unmistakably an elemental force. That an attitude is foolish, incoherent, disastrous, proves nothing against the depth of the instinct that inspires it. Who could be more intensely unintelligent than Luther or Rousseau? Yet the world followed them, not to turn back. The molecular forces of society, so to speak, had already undermined the systems which these men denounced. If the systems have survived it is only because the reformers, in their intellectual helplessness, could supply nothing to take their place. So Nietzsche, in his genial imbecility, betrays the shifting of great subterranean forces. What he said may be nothing, but the fact that he said it is all-important. Out of such wild intuitions,

because the heart of the child was in them, the man of the future may have to build his philosophy. We should forgive Nietzsche his boyish blasphemies. He hated with clearness, if he did not know what to love.

85

INTRINSIC VALUES

Both Christianity and romanticism accustomed people to disregard the intrinsic value of things. Things ought to be useful for salvation, or symbols of other greater but unknown things: it was not to be expected that they should be simply good in themselves. This life was to be justified, if justified at all, only as servile work or tedious business may be justified, not as health or artistic expression justify themselves. Unless some external and ulterior end could be achieved by living, it was thought that life would be vanity. Remove now the expectation of a millennium or of a paradise in the sky, and it may seem that all serious value has disappeared from our earthly existence. Yet this feeling is only a temporary afterimage of a particular education.

The romantic poets, through pride, restlessness, and longing for vague impossible things, came to the same conclusion that the church had reached through censoriousness and hope. To be always dissatisfied seemed to that Faust-like age a mark of loftiness. To be dissatisfied is, indeed, a healthy and promising thing, when what troubles us can be set right; but the romantic mind despises such incidental improvements which far from freeing the wild egotistical soul would rather fatten and harness it. It is beneath the romantic pessimist to remember that people, in all ages, sometimes achieve what they have set their hearts on, and that if human will and conduct were better disciplined, this contentment would be more frequent and more massive. On the contrary, he asserts that willing is always and everywhere abortive.

How can he persuade himself of something so evidently false? By that mystical misinterpretation of human nature

which is perhaps the core of romanticism. He imagines that what is desired is not this or that—food, children, victory, knowledge, or some other specific goal of a human instinct—but an abstract and perpetual happiness behind all these alternating interests. Of course an abstract and perpetual happiness is impossible, not merely because events are sure to disturb any equilibrium we may think we have established in our lives, but for the far more fundamental reason that we have no abstract and perpetual instinct to satisfy. The desire for self-preservation or power or union with God is no more perpetual or comprehensive than any other: it is commonly when we are in straits that we become aware of such objects, and to achieve them, or imagine we achieve them, will give us only a momentary satisfaction, like any other success. A highest good to be obtained apart from each and every specific interest is more than unattainable; it is unthinkable. The romanticist, chasing wilfully that *ignis fatuus*, naturally finds his life arduous and disappointing. But he might have learned from Plato or any sound moralist, if his genius could allow him to learn anything, that the highest good of man is the sum and harmony of those specific goods upon which his nature is directed. But because the romantic will was unteachable, all will was declared to be foolish.

86

HEATHENISM

SCHOPENHAUER somewhere observes that the word heathen, no longer in reputable use elsewhere, had found a last asylum in Oxford, the paradise of dead philosophies. Even Oxford, I believe, has now abandoned it; yet it is a good word. It conveys, as no other word can, the sense of vast multitudes tossing in darkness, harassed by demons of their own choice. No doubt it implies also a certain sanctimony in the superior person who uses it, as if he at least were not chattering in the general Babel. What justified Jews, Christians, and Moslems (as Mohammed in particular insisted) in feeling this superiority was the

possession of a Book, a chart of life, as it were, in which the most important features of history and morals were mapped out for the guidance of teachable men. The heathen, on the contrary, were abandoned to their own devices, and even prided themselves on following only their spontaneous will, their habit, presumption, or caprice.

Most unprejudiced people would now agree that the value of those sacred histories and rules of life did not depend on their alleged miraculous origin, but rather on that solidity and perspicacity in their authors which enabled them to perceive the laws of sweet and profitable conduct in this world. It was not religion merely that was concerned, at least not that outlying, private, and almost negligible sphere to which we often apply this name; it was the whole fund of experience mankind had gathered by living; it was wisdom. Now, to record these lessons of experience, the Greeks and Romans also had their Books; their history, poetry, science, and civil law. So that while the theologically heathen may be those who have no Bible, the morally and essentially heathen are those who possess no authoritative wisdom, or reject the authority of what wisdom they have; the untaught or unteachable who disdain not only revelation but what revelation stood for among early peoples, namely, funded experience.

In this sense the Greeks were the least heathen of men. They were singularly docile to political experiment, to law, to methodical art, to the proved limitations and resources of mortal life. This life they found closely hedged about by sky, earth, and sea, by war, madness, and conscience with their indwelling deities, by oracles and local genii with their accustomed cults, by a pervasive fate, and the jealousy of invisible gods. Yet they saw that these divine forces were constant, and that they exercised their pressure and bounty with so much method that a prudent art and religion could be built up in their midst. All this was simply a poetic prologue to science and the arts; it largely passed into them, and would have passed into them altogether if the naturalistic genius of Greece had not been crossed in Socrates by a premature discouragement, and diverted into other channels.

Early Hebraism itself had hardly been so wise. It had regarded its tribal and moral interests as absolute, and the Creator as the champion and omnipotent agent of Israel. But this arrogance and inexperience were heathen. Soon the ascendency of Israel over nature and history was proclaimed to be conditional on their fidelity to the Law; and as the spirit of the nation under chastisement became more and more penitential, it was absorbed increasingly in the praise of wisdom. Salvation was to come only by repentance, by being born again with a will wholly transformed and broken; so that the later Jewish religion went almost as far as Platonism or Christianity in the direction opposite to heathenism.

This movement in the direction of an orthodox wisdom was regarded as a progress in those latter days of antiquity when it occurred, and it continued to be so regarded in Christendom until the rise of romanticism. The most radical reformers simply urged that the current orthodoxy, religious or scientific, was itself imperfectly orthodox, being corrupt, overloaded, too vague, or too narrow. As every actual orthodoxy is avowedly incomplete and partly ambiguous, a sympathetic reform of it is always in order. Yet very often the reformers are deceived. What really offends them may not be what is false in the received orthodoxy, but what though true is uncongenial to them. In that case heathenism, under the guise of a search for a purer wisdom, is working in their souls against wisdom of any sort. Such is the suspicion that Catholics would throw on Protestantism, naturalists on idealism, and conservatives generally on all revolutions.

But if ever heathenism needed to pose as constructive reform, it is now quite willing and able to throw off the mask. Desire for any orthodox wisdom at all may be repudiated; it may be set down to low vitality and failure of nerve. In various directions at once we see to-day an intense hatred and disbelief gathering head against the very notion of a cosmos to be discovered, or a stable human nature to be respected. Nature, we are told, is an artificial symbol employed by life; truth is a temporary convention; art is an expression of personality; war is better than peace, effort than achievement, and feeling

than intelligence; change is deeper than form; will is above morality. Expressions of this kind are sometimes wanton and only half thought out; but they go very deep in the subjective direction. Behind them all is a sincere revulsion against the difficult and confused undertakings of reason; against science, institutions, and moral compulsions. They mark an honest retreat into immediate experience and animal faith. Man used to be called a rational animal, but his rationality is something eventual and ideal, whereas his animality is actual and profound. Heathenism, if we consider life at large, is the primal and universal religion.

It has never been my good fortune to see wild beasts in the jungle, but I have sometimes watched a wild bull in the ring, and I can imagine no more striking, simple, and heroic example of animal faith; especially when the bull is what is technically called noble, that is, when he follows the lure again and again with eternal singleness of thought, eternal courage, and no suspicion of a hidden agency that is mocking him. What the red rag is to this brave creature, their passions, inclinations, and chance notions are to the heathen. What they will they will; and they would deem it weakness and disloyalty to ask whether it is worth willing or whether it is attainable. The bull, magnificently sniffing the air, surveys the arena with the cool contempt and disbelief of the idealist, as if he said: "You seem, you are a seeming; I do not quarrel with you, I do not fear you. I am real, you are nothing." Then suddenly, when his eye is caught by some bright cloak displayed before him, his whole soul changes. His will awakes and he seems to say: "You are my destiny; I want you, I hate you, you shall be mine, you shall not stand in my path. I will gore you. I will disprove you. I will pass beyond you. I shall be, you shall not have been." Later, when sorely wounded and near his end, he grows blind to all these excitements. He smells the moist earth, and turns to the dungeon where an hour ago he was at peace. He remembers the herd, the pasture beyond, and he dreams: "I shall not die, for I love life. I shall be young again, young always, for I love youth. All this outcry is nought to me, this strange suffering is

nought. I will go to the fields again, to graze, to roam, to love."

So exactly, with not one least concession to the unsuspected reality, the heathen soul stands bravely before a painted world, covets some bauble, and defies death. Heathenism is the religion of will, the faith which life has in itself because it is life, and in its aims because it is pursuing them.

PART V

LITTLE ESSAYS ON MATERIALISM AND MORALS

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MORAL NEUTRALITY OF MATERIALISM

MATERIALISM, like any system of natural philosophy, carries with it no commandments and no advice. It merely describes the world, including the aspirations and consciences of mortals, and refers all to a material ground. The materialist, being a man, will not fail to have preferences, and even a conscience, of his own; but his precepts and policy will express, not the logical implications of his science, but his human instincts, as inheritance and experience may have shaped them. Any system of ethics might accordingly coexist with materialism; for if materialism declares certain things (like immortality) to be impossible, it cannot declare them to be undesirable. Nevertheless, it is not likely that a man so constituted as to embrace materialism will be so constituted as to pursue things which he considers unattainable. There is therefore a psychological, though no logical, bond between materialism and a homely morality.

The materialist is primarily an observer; and he will probably be such in ethics also; that is, he will have no ethics, except the emotion produced upon him by the march of the world. If he is an *esprit fort* and really disinterested, he will love life; as we all love perfect vitality, or what strikes us as such, in gulls and porpoises. This, I think, is the ethical sentiment psychologically consonant with a vigorous materialism: sympathy with the movement of things, interest in the rising wave, delight at the foam it bursts into, before it sinks again. Nature does not distinguish the better from the worse, but the lover of nature does. He calls better what, being analogous to his own life, enhances his vitality and probably possesses

some vitality of its own. This is the ethical feeling of Spinoza, the greatest of modern naturalists in philosophy; and Lucretius, in spite of his fidelity to the ascetic Epicurus, is carried by his poetic ecstasy in the same direction.

But mark the crux of this union: the materialist will love the life of nature when he loves his own life; if he should hate his own life, how should the life of nature please him? Now Epicurus, for the most part, hated life. His moral system, called hedonism, recommends that sort of pleasure which has no excitement and no risk about it. This ideal is modest, and even chaste, but it is not vital. Epicurus was remarkable for his mercy, his friendliness, his utter horror of war, of sacrifice, of suffering. These are not sentiments that a genuine naturalist would be apt to share. Pity and repentance, Spinoza said, were vain and evil; what increased a man's power and his joy increased his goodness also. The naturalist will believe in a certain hardness, as Nietzsche did; he will incline to a certain scorn, as the laughter of Democritus was scornful. He will not count too scrupulously the cost of what he achieves; he will be an imperialist, rapt in the joy of achieving something. In a word, the moral hue of materialism in a formative age, or in an aggressive mind, would be aristocratic and imaginative; but in a decadent age, or in a soul that is renouncing everything, it would be, as in Epicurus, humanitarian and timidly sensual.

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VALUE IRRATIONAL

Since the days of Descartes it has been a conception familiar to philosophers that every visible event in nature might be explained by previous visible events, and that all the motions, for instance, of the tongue in speech, or of the hand in painting, might have merely physical causes. If consciousness is thus accessory to life and not essential to it, the race of man might have existed upon the earth and acquired all the arts necessary for its subsistence without possessing a single sensation, idea, or emotion. Natural selection might have secured the survival of

those automata which made useful reactions upon their environment. An instinct of self-preservation would have been developed, dangers would have been shunned without being feared, and injuries avenged without being felt.

In such a world there might have come to be the most perfect organization. There would have been what we should call the expression of the deepest interests and the apparent pursuit of conceived goods. For there would have been spontaneous and ingrained tendencies to avoid certain contingencies and to produce others; all the dumb show and evidence of thinking would have been patent to the observer; he might have feigned ends and objects of forethought, as in the case of the water that seeks its own level, or of the vacuum which nature abhors. But the particles of matter would have remained unconscious of their collocation, and all nature would have been insensible of their changing arrangement. We only, the possible spectators of that process, by virtue of our own interests and habits, could see any progress or culmination in it. We should see culmination where the result attained satisfied our practical or æsthetic demands, and progress wherever such a satisfaction was approached. But apart from ourselves, and our human bias, we can see in such a mechanical world no element of value whatever. In removing consciousness, we have removed the possibility of worth.

But it is not only in the absence of all consciousness that value would be removed from the world; by a less violent abstraction from the total life of nature, we might conceive beings of a purely intellectual cast, minds in which the transformations of things were mirrored without any emotion. Every event would then be noted, its relations would be observed, its recurrence might even be expected; but all this would happen without a shadow of desire, of pleasure, or of regret. No event would be repulsive, no situation terrible. We might, in a word, have a world of idea without a world of will. In this case, as completely as if consciousness were absent altogether, all value and excellence would be gone. So that for the existence of good in any form it is not merely consciousness but emotional consciousness that is needed. Observation will not do, appreciation is required.

We may therefore at once assert this axiom, important for all moral philosophy and fatal to certain stubborn incoherences of thought, that there is no value apart from some appreciation of it, and no good apart from some preference of it before its absence or its opposite. In appreciation, in preference, lies the root and essence of all excellence. Or, as Spinoza clearly expresses it, we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it.

It is true that in the absence of an instinctive reaction we can still apply these epithets by an appeal to usage. We may agree that an action is bad, or a building good, because we recognize in them a character which we have learned to designate by that adjective ; but unless there is in us some trace of passionate reprobation or of sensible delight, there is no moral or æsthetic judgment. It is all a question of propriety of speech, and of the empty titles of things. The verbal and mechanical proposition, that passes for judgment of worth, is the great cloak of ineptitude in these matters. Insensibility is very quick in the conventional use of words. If we appealed more often to actual feeling, our judgments would be more diverse, but they would be more legitimate and instructive.

Values spring from the immediate and inexplicable reaction of vital impulse, and from the irrational part of our nature. The rational part is by its essence relative ; it leads us from data to conclusions, or from parts to wholes ; it never furnishes the data with which it works. If any preference or precept were declared to be ultimate and primitive, it would thereby be declared to be irrational, since mediation, inference, and synthesis are the essence of rationality. The ideal of rationality is itself as arbitrary, as much dependent on the needs of a finite organization, as any other ideal. Only as ultimately securing tranquillity of mind, which the philosopher instinctively pursues, has it for him any necessity. In spite of the verbal propriety of saying that reason demands rationality, what really demands rationality, what makes it a good and indispensable thing and gives it all its authority, is not its own nature, but our need of it both in safe and economical action and in the pleasures of comprehension.

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EMOTIONS OF THE MATERIALIST

A THEORY is not an unemotional thing. If music can be full of passion, merely by giving form to a single sense, how with much more beauty or terror may not a vision be pregnant which brings order and method into everything that we know. Materialism has its distinct æsthetic and emotional colour, though this may be strangely affected and even reversed by contrast with systems of an incongruous hue, jostling it accidentally in a confused and amphibious mind. If you are in the habit of believing in special providences, or of expecting to continue your romantic adventures in a second life, materialism will dash your hopes most unpleasantly, and you may think for a year or two that you have nothing left to live for. But a thorough materialist, one born to the faith and not half plunged into it by an unexpected christening in cold water, will be like the superb Democritus, a laughing philosopher. His delight in a mechanism that can fall into so many marvellous and beautiful shapes, and can generate so many exciting passions, should be of the same intellectual quality as that which the visitor feels in a museum of natural history, where he views the myriad butterflies in their cases, the flamingoes and shell-fish, the mammoths and gorillas. Doubtless there were pangs in that incalculable life, but they were soon over; and how splendid meantime was the pageant, how infinitely interesting the universal interplay, and how foolish and inevitable those absolute little passions. Somewhat of that sort might be the sentiment that materialism would arouse in a vigorous mind, active, joyful, impersonal, and in respect to private illusions not without a touch of scorn.

To the genuine sufferings of living creatures the ethics that accompanies materialism has never been insensible; on the contrary, like other merciful systems, it has trembled too much at pain and tended to withdraw the will ascetically, lest the will should be defeated. Contempt for

mortal sorrows is reserved for those who drive with hosannas the Juggernaut car of absolute optimism. But against evils born of pure vanity and self-deception, against the verbiage by which man persuades himself that he is the goal and acme of the universe, laughter is the proper defence. Laughter also has this subtle advantage, that it need not remain without an overtone of sympathy and brotherly understanding; as the laughter that greets Don Quixote's absurdities and misadventures does not mock the hero's intent. His ardour was admirable, but the world must be known before it can be reformed pertinently, and happiness, to be attained, must be placed in reason.

Oblivious of Democritus, the unwilling materialists of our day have generally been awkwardly intellectual and quite incapable of laughter. If they have felt anything, they have felt melancholy. Their allegiance and affection were still fixed on those mythical sentimental worlds which they saw to be illusory. The mechanical world they believed in could not please them, in spite of its extent and fertility. When their imagination was chilled they spoke of nature, most unwarrantably, as dead, and when their judgment was heated they took the next step and called it unreal. A man is not blind, however, because every part of his body is not an eye, nor every muscle in his eye a nerve sensitive to light. Why, then, is nature dead, although it swarms with living organisms, if every part is not obviously animate? And why is the sun dark and cold, if it is bright and hot only to animal sensibility? This senseless lamentation is like the sophism of those Indian preachers who, to make men abandon the illusions of self-love, dilated on the shocking contents of the human body. Take off the skin, they cried, and you will discover nothing but loathsome bleeding and quivering substances. Yet the inner organs are well enough in their place and doubtless pleasing to the microbes that inhabit them; and a man is not hideous because his cross-section would not offer the features of a beautiful countenance. So the structure of the world is not therefore barren or odious because, if you removed its natural outer aspect and effects, it would not make an interesting land-

scape. Beauty being an appearance and life an operation, that is surely beautiful and living which so operates and so appears as to manifest those qualities.

It is true that materialism prophesies an ultimate extinction for man and all his works. The horror which this prospect inspires in the natural man might be mitigated by reflection; but, granting the horror, is it something introduced by mechanical theories and not present in experience itself? Are human things inwardly stable? Do they belong to the eternal in any sense in which the operation of material forces can touch their immortality? The panic which seems to seize some minds at the thought of a merely natural existence is something truly hysterical; and yet one wonders why ultimate peace should seem so intolerable to people who not so many years ago found a stern religious satisfaction in consigning almost the whole human race to perpetual torture, the Creator, as Saint Augustine tells us, having in his infinite wisdom and justice devised a special kind of material fire that might avail to burn resurrected bodies for ever without consuming them. A very real truth might be read into this savage symbol, if we understood it to express the ultimate defeats and fruitless agonies that pursue human folly; and so we might find that it gave mythical expression to just that conditioned fortune and inexorable flux which a mechanical philosophy shows us the grounds of. Our own vices in another man seem particularly hideous; and so those actual evils which we take for granted when incorporated in the current system strike us afresh when we see them in a new setting. But it is not mechanical science that introduced mutability into things nor materialism that invented death.

The death of individuals, as we observe daily in nature, does not prevent the reappearance of life; and if we choose to indulge in arbitrary judgments on a subject where data fail us, we may as reasonably wish that there might be less life as that there might be more. The passion for a large and permanent population in the universe is not obviously rational; at a great distance a man must view everything, including himself, under the form of eternity, and when life is so viewed its length or its diffusion becomes

a point of little importance. What matters then is quality. The reasonable and humane demand to make of the world is that such creatures as exist should not be unhappy, and that life, whatever its quantity, should have a quality that may justify it in its own eyes. This just demand, made by conscience and not by an arbitrary fancy, the world described by materialism does not fulfil altogether, for adjustments in it are tentative, and much friction must precede and follow upon any vital equilibrium attained. This imperfection, however, is actual, and no theory can overcome it except by verbal fallacies and scarcely deceptive euphemisms. What materialism involves in this respect is exactly what we find: a tentative appearance of life in many quarters, its disappearance in some, and its reinforcement and propagation in others, where the physical equilibrium attained insures to it a natural stability and a natural prosperity.

To pass beyond good and evil is to reach a sublime necessity which, to an unselfish and pure intellect, may seem a grander thing. All depends on not being afraid to confess that the universe is non-human, and that man is relative. Let a man once overcome his selfish terror at his own finitude, and his finitude itself is, in one sense, overcome. A part of his soul, in sympathy with the infinite, has accepted the natural status of all the rest of his being. Perhaps the only true dignity of man is his capacity to despise himself. When he attains this dignity all things lose what was threatening and sinister about them, without needing to change their material form or their material influence. Man's intellectual part and his worshipping part have made their peace with the world.

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SADNESS OF NATURALISM

It is a remarkable fact, which may easily be misinterpreted, that while all the benefits and pleasures of life seem to be associated with external things, and all certain knowledge seems to describe material laws, yet a deified

nature has generally inspired a religion of melancholy. Why should the only intelligible philosophy seem to defeat reason and the chief means of benefiting mankind seem to blast our best hopes? Whence this profound aversion to so beautiful and fruitful a universe? Whence this persistent search for invisible regions and powers and for metaphysical explanations that can explain nothing, while nature's voice without and within man cries aloud to him to look, act, and enjoy? And when some one, in protest against such senseless oracular prejudices, has actually embraced the life and faith of nature and taught others to look to the natural world for all motives and sanctions, expecting thus to refresh and marvellously to invigorate human life, why have those innocent hopes failed so miserably? Why is that sensuous optimism we may call Greek, or that industrial optimism we may call American, such a thin disguise for despair? Why does each melt away and become a mockery at the first approach of reflection? Why has man's conscience in the end invariably rebelled against naturalism and reverted in some form or other to a cultus of the unseen?

We may answer in the words of Saint Paul: because things seen are temporal and things not seen are eternal. And we may add that the eternal is the truly human, that which is akin to the first indispensable products of intelligence, which arise by the fusion of successive images in discourse, and transcend the particular in time, peopling the mind with permanent and recognizable objects, and strengthening it with a synthetic, dramatic apprehension of itself and its own experience. Concretion in existence, on the contrary, yields essentially detached and empirical unities, foreign to mind in spite of their order, and unintelligible in spite of their clearness. Reason fails to assimilate in them precisely that which makes them existent, namely, their presence here and now, in this order and number. The form and quality of them we can retain, domesticate, and weave into the texture of reflection, but their existence and individuality remain a dogma of sense needing to be verified anew at every moment and actually receiving continual verification or disproof while we live in this world.

" This world " we call it, not without justifiable pathos, for many other worlds are conceivable and if discovered might prove more rational and intelligible and more akin to the soul than this strange universe which man has hitherto always looked upon with increasing astonishment. The materials of experience are no sooner in hand than they are transformed by intelligence, reduced to those permanent presences, those natures and relations, which alone can live in discourse. Those materials, rearranged into the abstract summaries we call history or science, or pieced out into the reconstructions and extensions we call poetry or religion, furnish us with ideas of as many dream-worlds as we please, all nearer to reason's ideal than is the actual chaos of perceptual experience, and some nearer to the heart's desire. When an empirical philosophy, therefore, calls us back from the irresponsible flights of imagination to the shock of sense and tries to remind us that in this alone we touch existence and come upon fact, we feel dispossessed of our nature and cramped in our life. The actuality possessed by existence cannot make up for its instability, nor the applicability of scientific principles for their hypothetical character. The dependence upon sense, which we are reduced to when we consider the world of existences, becomes a too plain hint of our essential impotence and mortality, while the play of logical fancy, though it remain inevitable, is saddened by a consciousness of its own insignificance.

That dignity, then, which inheres in logical ideas and their affinity to moral enthusiasm, springs from their congruity with the primary habits of intelligence and idealization. The soul or self or personality, which in sophisticated social life is so much the centre of passion and concern, is itself an idea, a concretion in discourse; and the level on which it swims comes to be, by association and affinity, the region of all the more vivid and massive human interests. The pleasures which lie beneath it are ignored, and the ideals which lie above it are not perceived. Aversion to an empirical or naturalistic philosophy accordingly expresses a sort of logical patriotism and attachment to homespun ideas. The actual is too remote and unfriendly to the dreamer; to understand it he has to learn

a foreign tongue, which his native prejudice imagines to be unmeaning and unpoetical. The truth is, however, that nature's language is too rich for man; and the discomfort he feels when he is compelled to use it merely marks his lack of education. There is nothing cheaper than idealism. It can be had by merely not observing the ineptitude of our chance prejudices, and by declaring that the first rhymes that have struck our ear are the eternal and necessary harmonies of the world.

With nature so full of stuff before him, I can hardly conceive what morbid instinct can tempt a man to look elsewhere for wider vistas, unless it be unwillingness to endure the sadness and the discipline of the truth.

If it be true that matter is sinful, the logic of this truth is far from being what the fanatics imagine who commonly propound it. Matter is sinful only because it is insufficient or is wastefully distributed. There is not enough of it to go round among the legion of hungry ideas. To embody or enact an idea is the only way of making it actual: but its embodiment may mutilate it, if the material or the situation is not propitious. So an infant may be maimed at birth, when what injures him is not being brought forth, but being brought forth in the wrong manner. Matter has a double function in respect to moral life: essentially it enables the spirit to be, yet chokes it incidentally. Men sadly misbegotten, or those who are thwarted at every step by the times' penury, may fall to thinking of matter only by its defect, ignoring the material ground of their own aspirations. All flesh will seem to them weak, except that forgotten piece of it which makes their own spiritual strength. Every impulse, however, had initially the same authority as this censorious one, by which the others are now judged and condemned.

Throw open to the young poet the infinity of nature; let him feel the precariousness of life, the variety of purposes, civilizations, and religions even upon this little planet; let him trace the triumphs and follies of art and philosophy, and their perpetual resurrections. If, under the stimulus of such a scene, he does not some day compose a natural comedy as much surpassing Dante's divine comedy in sublimity and richness as it will surpass it in

truth, the fault will not lie with the subject, which is inviting and magnificent, but with the halting genius that cannot render that subject worthily.

Undoubtedly, the universe so displayed would not be without its dark shadows and its perpetual tragedies. That is in the nature of things. Dante's cosmos, for all its mythical idealism, was not so false as not to have a hell in it. Those rolling spheres, with all their lights and music, circled for ever about hell. Perhaps in the real life of nature evil may not prove to be so central as that. It would seem to be rather a sort of inevitable but incidental friction, capable of being diminished indefinitely, as the world is better known and the will is better educated. In Dante's spheres there could be no discord whatever; but at the core of them was eternal woe. In the star-dust of our physics discords are everywhere, and harmony is only tentative and approximate, as it is in the best earthly life; but at the core there is nothing sinister, only freedom, innocence, inexhaustible possibilities of all sorts of happiness.

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HAPPINESS IN DISILLUSION

Why the world appears as it does, whether of itself or by refraction in the medium of our intellect, is not a question that affects the practical moralist. What concerns him is that the laws of the world, whatever their origin, are fixed and unchangeable conditions of our happiness. We cannot change the world, even if we boast that we have made it; we must in any case learn to live with it, whether it be our parent or our child. To veil its character with euphemisms or to supply its defects with superstitious assumptions is a course unworthy of a brave man and abhorrent to a prudent one. What we should do is to make a modest inventory of our possessions and a just estimate of our powers in order to apply both, with what strength we have, to the realization of our ideals in society, in art, and in science. These will constitute our Cosmos. In

building it—for there is none other that builds it for us—we shall be carrying on the work of the only race that has yet seriously attempted to live rationally, the race to which we owe the name and the idea of a Cosmos, as well as the beginnings of its realization. We shall then be making that rare advance in wisdom which consists in abandoning our illusions the better to attain our ideals.

The deceptions which nature practises on man are not always cruel. There are also kindly deceptions which prompt him to pursue or expect his own good when, though not destined to come in the form he looks for, this good is really destined to come in some shape or other. Such, for instance, are the illusions of romantic love, which may really terminate in a family life practically better than the absolute and chimerical unions which that love had dreamed of. Such, again, are those illusions of conscience which attach unspeakable vague penalties and repugnances to acts which commonly have bad results, though these are impossible to forecast with precision. When disillusion comes, while it may bring a momentary shock, it ends by producing a settled satisfaction unknown before, a satisfaction which the coveted prize, could it have been attained, would hardly have secured. When on the day of judgment, or earlier, a man perceives that what he thought he was doing for the Lord's sake he was really doing for the benefit of the least, perhaps, of the Lord's creatures, his satisfaction, after a moment's surprise, will certainly be very genuine.

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THE TRUE PLACE OF MATERIALISM

MATERIALISM is not a system of metaphysics; it is a speculation in chemistry and physiology, to the effect that, if analysis could go deep enough, it would find that all substance was homogeneous, and that all motion was regular. The atoms of Democritus seem to us gross, even for

chemistry, and their quality would have to undergo great transformation if they were to support intelligibly psychic being as well; but that very grossness and false simplicity had its merits, and science must be for ever grateful to the man who at its inception could so clearly formulate its mechanical ideal. That the world is not so intelligible as we could wish is not to be wondered at. In other respects also it fails to respond to our demands; yet our hope must be to find it more propitious to the intellect as well as to all the arts in proportion as we learn better how to live in it.

The atoms of what we call hydrogen or oxygen may well turn out to be worlds, as the stars are which make atoms for astronomy. Their inner organization might be negligible on our rude plane of being; did it disclose itself, however, it would be intelligible in its turn only if constant parts and constant laws were discernible within each system. So that while atomism at a given level may not be a final or metaphysical truth, it will describe, on every level, the practical and efficacious structure of the world. We owe to Democritus this ideal of practical intelligibility; and he is accordingly an eternal spokesman of reason. His system, long buried with other glories of the world, has been partly revived; and although it cannot be verified in haste, for it represents an ultimate ideal, every advance in science reconstitutes it in some particular. Mechanism is not one principle of explanation among others. In natural philosophy, where to explain means to discover origins, transmutations, and laws, mechanism is explanation itself. But it does not ask to be worshipped. A theoretical materialist, who looks on the natural world as on a soil that he has risen from and feeds on, may perhaps feel a certain piety towards those obscure abysses of nature that have given him birth; but his delight will be rather in the clear things of the imagination, in the humanities, by which the rude forces of nature are at once expressed and eluded.

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INTUITIVE MORALITY

To one brought up in a sophisticated society, or in particular under an ethical religion, morality seems at first an external command, a chilling and arbitrary set of requirements and prohibitions which the young heart, if it trusted itself, would not reckon at a penny's worth. Yet while this rebellion is brewing in the secret conclave of the passions, the passions themselves are prescribing a code. They are inventing gallantry and kindness and honour; they are discovering friendship and paternity. With maturity comes the recognition that the authorized precepts of morality were essentially not arbitrary; that they expressed the genuine aims and interests of a practised will; that their alleged alien and supernatural basis (which if real would have deprived them of all moral authority) was but a mythical cover for their forgotten natural springs. Virtue is then seen to be admirable essentially, and not merely by conventional imputation. If traditional morality has much in it that is out of proportion, much that is unintelligent and inert, nevertheless it represents on the whole the verdict of reason. It speaks for a typical human will chastened by a typical human experience.

Gnomic wisdom, however, is notoriously polychrome, and proverbs depend for their truth entirely on the occasion they are applied to. Almost every wise saying has an opposite one, no less wise, to balance it; so that a man rich in such lore, like Sancho Panza, can always find a venerable maxim to fortify the view he happens to be taking. In respect to foresight, for instance, we are told, Make hay while the sun shines, A stitch in time saves nine, Honesty is the best policy, Murder will out, Woe unto you, ye hypocrites, Watch and pray, Seek salvation with fear and trembling, and *Respice finem.* But on the same authorities exactly we have apposite maxims, inspired by a feeling that mortal prudence is fallible, that life is shorter than policy, and that only the present is real; for we hear, A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, *Carpe*

diem, Ars longa, vita brevis, Be not righteous overmuch, Enough for the day is the evil thereof, Behold the lilies of the field, Judge not, that ye be not judged, Mind your own business, and It takes all sorts of men to make a world. So when some particularly shocking thing happens one man says, *Cherchez la femme,* and another says, Great is Allah.

That these maxims should be so various and partial is quite intelligible when we consider how they spring up. Every man, in moral reflection, is animated by his own intent; he has something in view which he prizes, he knows not why, and which wears to him the essential and unquestionable character of a good. With this standard before his eyes, he observes easily—for love and hope are extraordinarily keen-sighted—what in action or in circumstances forwards his purpose and what thwarts it; and at once the maxim comes, very likely in the language of the particular instance before him. Now the interests that speak in a man are different at different times; and the outer facts or measures which in one case promote that interest may, where other less obvious conditions have changed, altogether defeat it. Hence all sorts of precepts looking to all sorts of results.

Prescriptions of this nature differ enormously in value; for they differ enormously in scope. By chance intuitive maxims may be so central, so expressive of ultimate aims, so representative, I mean, of all aims in fusion, that they merely anticipate what moral science would have come to if it had existed. This happens much as in physics ultimate truths may be divined by poets long before they are discovered by investigators; the *vivida vis animi* taking the place of much recorded experience, because much unrecorded experience has secretly fed it. Such, for instance, is the central maxim of Christianity, Love thy neighbour as thyself. On the other hand, what is usual in intuitive codes is a mixture of some elementary precepts, necessary to any society, with others representing local traditions or ancient rites: so Thou shalt not kill, and Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day, figure side by side in the Decalogue. When Antigone, in her sublimest exaltation, defies human enactments and appeals to laws

which are not of to-day nor yesterday, no man knowing whence they have arisen, she mixes various types of obligation in a most instructive fashion; for a superstitious horror at leaving a body unburied—something decidedly of yesterday—gives poignancy in her mind to natural affection for a brother—something indeed universal, yet having a well-known origin. The passionate assertion of right is here, in consequence, more dramatic than spiritual; and even its dramatic force has suffered somewhat by the change in ruling ideals.

Intuitive ethics has nothing to offer in the presence of discord except an appeal to force and to ultimate physical sanctions. It can instigate, but cannot resolve, the battle of nations and the battle of religions. Precisely the same zeal, the same patriotism, the same readiness for martyrdom fires adherents to rival societies, and fires them especially in view of the fact that the adversary is no less uncompromising and fierce. It might seem idle, if not cruel and malicious, to wish to substitute one historical allegiance for another, when both are equally arbitrary, and the existing one is the more congenial to those born under it; but to feel this aggression to be criminal demands some degree of imagination and justice, and sectaries would not be sectaries if they possessed it.

Truly religious minds, while eager perhaps to extirpate every religion but their own, often rise above national jealousies; for spirituality is universal, whatever churches may be. Similarly politicians often understand very well the religious situation; and of late it has become again the general practice among prudent governments to do as the Romans did in their conquests, and to leave people free to exercise what religion they have, without pestering them with a foreign one. On the other hand the same politicians are the avowed agents of a quite patent iniquity; for what is their ideal? To substitute their own language, commerce, soldiers, and tax-gatherers for the tax-gatherers, soldiers, commerce, and language of their neighbours; and no means is thought illegitimate, be it fraud in policy or bloodshed in war, to secure this absolutely nugatory end. Is not one country as much a country as another? Is it not as dear to its inhabitants? What then is

gained by oppressing its genius or by seeking to destroy it altogether?

Here are two flagrant instances where pre-rational morality defeats the ends of morality. Viewed from within, each religious or national fanaticism stands for a good; but in its outward operation it produces and becomes an evil. It is possible, no doubt, that its agents are really so far apart in nature and ideals that, like men and mosquitoes, they can stand in physical relations only, and if they meet can meet only to poison or to crush one another. More probably, however, humanity in them is no merely nominal essence; it is definable ideally by a partially identical function and intent. In that case, by studying their own nature, they could rise above their mutual opposition, and feel that in their fanaticism they were taking too contracted a view of their own souls and were hardly doing justice to themselves when they did such great injustice to others.

94

RELATIVITY OF VALUES

I CANNOT help thinking that a consciousness of the relativity of values, if it became prevalent, would tend to render people more truly social than would a belief that things have intrinsic and unchangeable values, no matter what the attitude of any one to them may be. If we said that goods, including the right distribution of goods, are relative to specific natures, moral warfare would continue, but not with poisoned arrows. Our private sense of justice itself would be acknowledged to have but a relative authority, and while we could not have a higher duty than to follow it, we should seek to meet those whose aims were incompatible with it as we meet things physically inconvenient, without insulting them as if they were morally vile or logically contemptible. Real unselfishness consists in sharing the interests of others. Beyond the pale of actual unanimity the only possible unselfishness is chivalry—a recognition of the inward right and justifica-

tion of our enemies fighting against us. This chivalry has long been practised in the battle-field without abolishing the causes of war; and it might conceivably be extended to all the conflicts of men with one another, and of the warring elements within each breast. Policy, hypnotization, and even surgery may be practised without exorcisms or anathemas. When a man has decided on a course of action, it is a vain indulgence in expletives to declare that he is sure that course is absolutely right. His moral dogma expresses its natural origin all the more clearly the more hotly it is proclaimed; and ethical absolutism, being a mental grimace of passion, refutes what it says by what it is. Sweeter and more profound, to my sense, is the philosophy of Homer, whose every line seems to breathe the conviction that what is beautiful or precious has not thereby any right to existence; nothing has such a right; nor is it given us to condemn absolutely any force—god or man—that destroys what is beautiful or precious, for it has doubtless something beautiful or precious of its own to achieve.

If we were sure of our ground, we should be willing to acquiesce in the naturally different feelings and ways of others, as a man who is conscious of speaking his language with the accent of the capital confesses its arbitrariness with gaiety, and is pleased and interested in the variations of it he observes in provincials; but the provincial is always zealous to show that he has reason and ancient authority to justify his oddities. So people who have no sensations, and do not know why they judge, are always trying to show that they judge by universal reason.

It is unmeaning to say that what is beautiful to one man *ought* to be beautiful to another. Evidently this obligation of recognizing the same qualities is conditioned by the possession of the same faculties. But no two men have exactly the same faculties, nor can things have for any two exactly the same values. If their natures are different, the form which to one will be entrancing will be to another even invisible. And more: incapacity to appreciate certain types of beauty may be the condition *sine qua non* for the appreciation of another kind; the greatest capacity both for enjoyment and for creation is highly specialized,

and the greatest ages of art have often been strangely intolerant.

What is loosely expressed by saying that any one ought to see this or that beauty is that he would see it if his disposition, training, or attention were what our ideal demands for him ; and our ideal of what any one should be has complex but discoverable sources. We take, for instance, a certain pleasure in having our own judgments supported by those of others ; we are intolerant, if not of the existence of a nature different from our own, at least of its expression in words and judgments. We are confirmed or made happy in our doubtful opinions by seeing them accepted universally. If the animals could only speak the Inquisition would have had a pretty work on its hands.

There is no need of refuting anything, for the will which is behind all ideals and behind most dogmas cannot itself be refuted ; but it may be enlightened and led to reconsider its intent, when its satisfaction is seen to be either naturally impossible or inconsistent with better things. The age of controversy is past ; that of interpretation has succeeded.

95

AUTHORITY OF REASON IN MORALS

The objects of human desire until reason has compared and experience has tested them, are a miscellaneous assortment of goods, unstable in themselves and incompatible with one another. It is a happy chance if a tolerable mixture of them recommends itself to a prophet or finds an adventitious acceptance among a group of men. Intuitive morality is adequate while it simply enforces those obvious and universal laws which are indispensable to any society, and which impose themselves everywhere on men under pain of quick extinction—a penalty which many an individual and many a nation continually prefers to pay. But when intuitive morality tries to guide progress, its magic fails. Ideals are tentative and have to be critically viewed. A moralist who rests in his intuitions may be a good preacher, but hardly deserves the name of

philosopher. He cannot find any authority for his maxims which opposite maxims may not equally invoke. To settle the relative merits of rival authorities and of hostile consciences it is necessary to appeal to the only real authority, to experience, reason, and human nature in the living man. No other test is conceivable and no other would be valid; for no good man would ever consent to regard an authority as divine or binding which essentially contradicted his own conscience. Yet a conscience which is irreflective and incorrigible is too hastily satisfied with itself, and not conscientious enough: it needs cultivation by dialectic. It neglects to extend to all human interests that principle of synthesis and justice by which conscience itself has arisen. And so soon as the conscience summons its own dicta for revision in the light of experience and of universal sympathy, it is no longer called conscience, but reason. So, too, when the spirit summons its traditional faiths, to subject them to a similar examination, that exercise is not called religion, but philosophy. It is true, in a sense, that philosophy is the purest religion and reason the ultimate conscience; but so to name them would be misleading. The things commonly called by those names have seldom consented to live at peace with sincere reflection. It has been felt vaguely that reason could not have produced them, and that they might suffer sad changes by submitting to it; as if reason could be the *ground* of anything, or as if everything might not find its consummation in becoming rational.

There is one impulse which intuitive moralists ignore: the impulse to reflect. Human instincts are ignorant, multitudinous, and contradictory. To satisfy them as they come is often impossible, and often disastrous, in that such satisfaction prevents the satisfaction of other instincts inherently no less fecund and legitimate. When we apply reason to life we immediately demand that life be consistent, complete, and satisfactory when reflected upon and viewed as a whole. This view, as it presents each moment in its relations, extends to all moments affected by the action or maxim under discussion; it has no more ground for stopping at the limits of what is called a single life than at the limits of a single adventure. To

stop at selfishness is not particularly rational. The same principle that creates the ideal of a self creates the ideal of a family or an institution.

The conflict between selfishness and altruism is like that between any two ideal passions that in some particular may chance to be opposed; but such a conflict has no obstinate existence for reason. For reason the person itself has no obstinate existence. The *character* which a man achieves at the best moment of his life is indeed something ideal and significant; it justifies and consecrates all his coherent actions and preferences. But *the man's life*, the circle drawn by biographers around the career of a particular body, from the womb to the charnel-house, and around the mental flux that accompanies that career, is no significant unity. All the substances and efficient processes that figure within it come from elsewhere and continue beyond; while all the rational objects and interests to which it refers have a transpersonal status. Self-love itself is concerned with public opinion; and if a man concentrates his view on private pleasures, these may qualify the fleeting moments of his life with an intrinsic value, but they leave the life itself shapeless and infinite, as if sparks should play over a piece of burnt paper.

Rational morality is an embodiment of volition, not a description of it. It is the expression of living interest, preference, and categorical choice. It leaves to psychology and history a free field for the description of moral phenomena. It has no interest in slipping far-fetched and incredible myths beneath the facts of nature, so as to lend a non-natural origin to human aspirations. It even recognizes, as an emanation of its own force, that uncompromising truthfulness with which science assigns all forms of moral life to their place in the mechanical system of nature. But the rational moralist is not on that account reduced to a mere spectator, a physicist acknowledging no interest except the interest in facts and in the laws of change. His own spirit, small by the material forces which it may stand for and express, is great by its prerogative of surveying and judging the universe; surveying it, of course, from a mortal point of view, and judging it only by its kindliness or cruelty to some actual interest, yet,

even so, determining unequivocally a part of its constitution and excellence. The rational moralist represents a force energizing in the world, discovering its affinities there and clinging to them to the exclusion of their hateful opposites. He represents, over against the chance facts, an ideal embodying the particular demands, possibilities, and satisfactions of a reflective being.

The radical impulses at work in any animal must continue to speak while he lives, for they are his essence. A true morality does not have to be adopted; the parts of it best practised are those which are never preached. To be "converted" would be to pass from one self-betrayal to another. It would be to found a new morality on a new tyranny. The morality which has genuine authority exists inevitably and speaks autonomously in every common judgment, self-congratulation, ambition, or passion that fills the vulgar day. The pursuit of those goods which are the only possible or fitting crown of a man's life is predetermined by his nature; he cannot choose a law-giver, nor accept one, for none who spoke to the purpose could teach him anything but to know himself. Rational life is an art, not a slavery; and terrible as may be the errors and the apathy that impede its successful exercise, the standard and goal of it are given intrinsically. Any task imposed externally on a man is imposed by force only, a force he has the right to defy so soon as he can do so without creating some greater impediment to his natural vocation.

Those who are guided only by an irrational conscience can hardly understand what a good life would be. Their Utopias have to be supernatural in order that the irresponsible rules which they call morality may lead by miracle to happy results. But such a magical and undeserved happiness, if it were possible, would be unsavoury: only one phase of human nature would be satisfied by it, and so impoverished an ideal cannot really attract the will. For human nature has been moulded by the same natural forces among which its ideal has to be fulfilled, and, apart from a certain margin of wild hopes and extravagances, the things man's heart desires are attainable under his natural conditions and would not be attainable elsewhere. The conflict of desires and interests in the world is not

radical any more than man's dissatisfaction with his own nature can be; for every particular ideal, being an expression of human nature in operation, must in the end involve the primary human faculties and cannot be essentially incompatible with any other ideal which involves them too.

To adjust all demands to one ideal and adjust that ideal to its natural conditions—in other words, to live the life of reason—is something perfectly possible; for those demands, being akin to one another in spite of themselves, can be better furthered by co-operation than by blind conflict, while the ideal, far from demanding any profound revolution in nature, merely expresses her actual tendency and forecasts what her perfect functioning would be.

Reason as such represents or rather constitutes a single formal interest, the interest in harmony. When two interests are simultaneous and fall within one act of apprehension the desirability of harmonizing them is involved in the very effort to realize them together. If attention and imagination are steady enough to face this implication and not to allow impulse to oscillate between irreconcilable tendencies, reason comes into being. Henceforth things actual and things desired are confronted by an ideal which has both pertinence and authority.

96

PLEASURE INGENUOUS

EVERY real pleasure is in one sense disinterested. It is not sought with ulterior motives, and what fills the mind is no calculation, but the image of an object or event, suffused with emotion. A sophisticated consciousness may often take the idea of self as the touchstone of its inclinations; but this self, for the gratification and aggrandizement of which a man may live, is itself only a complex of aims and memories, which once had their direct objects, in which he had taken a spontaneous and ingenuous interest. The substance of selfishness is a mass of unselfishness. There is no reference to the nominal essence

called oneself either in one's appetites or in one's natural affections ; yet a man absorbed in his meat and drink, in his houses and lands, in his children and dogs, is called selfish because these interests, although natural and instinctive in him, are not shared by others. Even our vanities and follies are disinterested in their way. When a man orders his tomb according to his taste, it is not in the hope of enjoying his residence in it.

When moralists deprecate passion and contrast it with reason, they do so, if they are themselves rational, only because passion is so often "guilty," because it works havoc so often in the surrounding world and leaves, among other ruins, "a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed." Were there no danger of such after-effects within and without the sufferer, no passion would be reprehensible. Nature is innocent, and so are all her impulses and moods when taken in isolation ; it is only on meeting that they blush.

97

THE LOWER SENSES

Artists in life, if that expression may be used for those who have beautified social and domestic existence, have appealed continually to the lower senses. A fragrant garden, and savoury meats, incense, and perfumes, soft stuffs, and delicious colours, form our ideal of oriental luxuries, an ideal which appeals too much to human nature ever to lose its charm. Yet our northern poets have seldom attempted to arouse these images in their sensuous intensity, without relieving them by some imaginative touch. In Keats, for example, we find the following lines :

> And still she slept in azure-lidded sleep,
> In blanched linen, smooth and lavendered,
> While he from forth the closet brought a heap
> Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
> With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
> And lucent syrops tinct with cinnamon ;
> Manna and dates in argosy transferred
> From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one
> From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

Even the most sensuous of English poets, in whom the love of beauty is supreme, cannot keep long to the primal elements of beauty ; the higher flight is inevitable for him. And how much does not the appeal to things in argosy transferred from Fez, reinforced with the reference to Samarcand and especially to the authorized beauties of the cedars of Lebanon, which even the Puritan may sing without a blush, add to our wavering satisfaction and reconcile our conscience to this unchristian indulgence of sense !

But the time may be near when such scruples will be less common, and our poetry, with our other arts, will dwell nearer to the fountain-head of all inspiration. For if nothing not once in sense is to be found in the intellect, much less is such a thing to be found in the imagination. If the cedars of Lebanon did not spread a grateful shade, or the winds rustle through the maze of their branches, if Lebanon had never been beautiful to sense, it would not now be a fit or poetic subject of allusion. And the word " Fez " would be without imaginative value if no traveller had ever felt the intoxication of the torrid sun, or the languors of oriental luxury. Nor would Samarcand be anything but for the mystery of the desert and the picturesqueness of caravans, nor would an argosy be poetic if the sea had no voices and no foam, the winds and oars no resistance, and the rudder and taut sheets no pull. From these real sensations imagination draws its life, and suggestion its power. The sweep of the fancy is itself also agreeable ; but the superiority of the distant over the present is only due to the mass and variety of the pleasures that can be suggested, compared with the poverty of those that can at any time be felt.

98

PLEASURE AND CONSCIENCE

Hedonistic ethics have always had to struggle against the moral sense of mankind. Earnest minds, that feel the weight and dignity of life, rebel against the assertion that the aim of right conduct is enjoyment. Pleasure usually appears to them as a temptation, and they sometimes go

so far as to make avoidance of it a virtue. The truth is that morality is not mainly concerned with the attainment of pleasure; it is rather concerned, in all its deeper and more authoritative maxims, with the prevention of suffering. There is something artificial in the deliberate pursuit of pleasure; there is something absurd in the obligation to enjoy oneself. We feel no duty in that direction; we take to enjoyment naturally enough after the work of life is done, and the freedom and spontaneity of our pleasures is what is most essential to them.

The sad business of life is rather to escape certain dreadful evils to which our nature exposes us,—death, hunger, disease, weariness, isolation, and contempt. By the awful authority of these things, which stand like spectres behind every moral injunction, conscience in reality speaks, and a mind which they have duly impressed cannot but feel, by contrast, the hopeless triviality of the search for pleasure. A life abandoned to amusement and to changing impulses must run unawares into fatal dangers. The moment, however, that society emerges from the early pressure of the environment and is tolerably secure against primary evils, morality grows lax. The forms that life will farther assume are not to be imposed by moral authority, but are determined by the genius of the race, the opportunities of the moment, and the tastes and resources of individual minds. The reign of duty gives place to the reign of freedom, and the law and the covenant to the dispensation of grace.

99

THE WORTH OF PLEASURES AND PAINS

To put value in pleasure and pain, regarding a given quantity of pain as balancing a given quantity of pleasure, is to bring to practical ethics a worthy intention to be clear and, what is more precious, an undoubted honesty not always found in those moralists who maintain the opposite opinion and care more for edification than for truth. For in spite of all logical and psychological scruples, conduct

that should not justify itself somehow by the satisfactions secured and the pains avoided would not justify itself at all. The most instinctive and unavoidable desire is forthwith chilled if you discover that its ultimate end is to be a preponderance of suffering; and what arrests this desire is not fear or weakness but conscience in its most categorical and sacred guise. Who would not be ashamed to acknowledge or to propose so inhuman an action?

By sad experience rooted impulses may be transformed or even obliterated. A mind that foresees pain to be the ultimate result of action cannot continue unreservedly to act, seeing that its foresight is the conscious transcript of a recoil already occurring. Conversely, the mind that surrenders itself wholly to any impulse must think that its execution would be delightful. A perfectly wise and representative morality, therefore, would aim only at what, in its attainment, could continue to be aimed at and approved; and this is another way of saying that its aim would secure the maximum of satisfaction eventually possible.

In spite, however, of this involution of pain and pleasure in all deliberate forecast and volition, pain and pleasure are not the ultimate sources of value. When Petrarch says that a thousand pleasures are not worth one pain, he establishes an ideal of value deeper than either pleasure or pain, an ideal which makes a life of satisfaction marred by a single pang an offence and a horror to his soul. If our demand for rationality is less acute and the miscellaneous affirmations of the will carry us along with a well-fed indifference to some single tragedy within us, we may aver that a single pang is only the thousandth part of a thousand pleasures and that a life so balanced is nine hundred and ninety-nine times better than nothing. This judgment, for all its air of mathematical calculation, in truth expresses a choice as irrational as Petrarch's. It merely means that, as a matter of fact, the mixed prospect presented to us attracts our wills and attracts them vehemently. So that the only possible criterion for the relative values of pains and pleasures is the will that chooses among them or among combinations of them. All beliefs about future experience, with all premonition of its emotional quality, are

based on actual impulse and feeling; so that the source of estimation is nothing but the inner fountain of life and imagination, and the object of pursuit nothing but the ideal object, counterpart of the present demand. Abstract satisfaction is not pursued, but, if the will and the environment are constant, satisfaction will necessarily be felt in achieving the object desired.

A rejection of hedonistic psychology, therefore, by no means involves any opposition to eudæmonism in ethics. Eudæmonism is another name for wisdom: there is no other *moral* morality. Any system that, for some sinister reason, should absolve itself from good-will toward all creatures, and make it somehow a duty to secure their misery, would be clearly disloyal to reason, humanity, and justice. Nor would it be hard, in that case, to point out what superstition, what fantastic obsession, or what private fury had made those persons blind to prudence and kindness in so plain a matter. Happiness is the only sanction of life; where happiness fails, existence remains a mad and lamentable experiment. The question, however, what happiness shall consist in, its complexion if it should once arise, can only be determined by reference to natural demands and capacities; so that while satisfaction by the attainment of ends can alone justify their pursuit, this pursuit itself must exist first and be spontaneous, thereby fixing the goals of endeavour and distinguishing the states in which satisfaction might be found. Natural disposition, therefore, is the principle of preference and makes morality and happiness possible.

The polemic which certain moralists have waged against pleasure and in favour of pain is intelligible when we remember that their chief interest is edification, and that ability to resist pleasure and pain alike is a valuable virtue in a world where action and renunciation are the twin keys to happiness. But to deny that pleasure is a good and pain an evil is a grotesque affectation. A man who without necessity deprived any person of a pleasure or imposed on him a pain, would be a contemptible knave, and the person so injured would be the first to declare it, nor could the highest celestial tribunal, if it was just, reverse that sentence. For it suffices that one being,

however weak, loves or abhors anything, no matter how slightly, for that thing to acquire a proportionate value which no chorus of contradiction ringing through all the spheres can ever wholly abolish. An experience good or bad in itself remains so for ever, and its inclusion in a more general order of things can only change that totality proportionately to the ingredient absorbed, which will infect the mass, so far as it goes, with its own colour. The more pleasure a universe can yield, other things being equal, the more beneficent and generous is its general nature; the more pains its constitution involves, the darker and more malign is its total temper. To deny this would seem impossible, yet it is done daily; for there is nothing people will not maintain when they are slaves to superstition; and candour and a sense of justice are, in such a case, the first things lost.

100

THE VOLUPTUARY AND THE WORLDLING

Worldly minds bristle with conventional morality (though in private they may nurse a vice or two to appease wayward nature), and they are rational in everything except first principles. They consider the voluptuary a weak fool, disgraced and disreputable; and if they notice the spiritual man at all—for he is easily ignored—they regard him as a useless and visionary fellow. Civilization has to work algebraically with symbols for known and unknown quantities which only in the end resume their concrete values, so that the journeymen and vulgar middlemen of the world know only conventional goods. They are lost in instrumentalities and are themselves only instruments in the life of reason. Wealth, station, fame, success of some notorious and outward sort, make their standard of happiness. Their chosen virtues are industry, good sense, probity, conventional piety, and whatever else has acknowledged utility and seemliness.

In its strictures on pleasure and reverie this Philistia is perfectly right. Sensuous living (and I do not mean

debauchery alone, but the palpitations of any poet without art or any mystic without discipline) is not only inconsequential and shallow, but dangerous to honour and to sincere happiness. When life remains lost in sense or reverts to it entirely, humanity itself is atrophied. And humanity is tormented and spoilt when, as more often happens, a man disbelieving in reason and out of humour with his world, abandons his soul to loose whimsies and passions that play a quarrelsome game there, like so many ill-bred children. Nevertheless, compared with the worldling's mental mechanism and rhetoric, the sensualist's soul is a well of wisdom. He lives naturally on an animal level and attains a kind of good. He has free and concrete pursuits, though they be momentary, and he has sincere satisfactions. He is less often corrupt than primitive, and even when corrupt he finds some justification for his captious existence. He harvests pleasures as he goes which, taken intrinsically, may have the depth and ideality which nature breathes in all her oracles. His experience, for that reason, though disastrous is interesting and has some human pathos ; it is easier to make a saint out of a libertine than out of a prig. True, the libertine is pursued, like the animals, by unforeseen tortures, decay, and abandonment, and he is vowed to a total death ; but in these respects the worldly man has hardly an advantage. The Babels he piles up may indeed survive his person, but they are themselves vain and without issue, while his brief life has been meantime spent in slavery and his mind cramped with cant and foolish ambitions. The voluptuary is like some roving creature, browsing on nettles and living by chance ; the worldling is like a beast of burden, now ill-used and overworked, now fatted, stalled, and richly caparisoned. Æsop might well have described their relative happiness in a fable about the wild ass and the mule.

Thus, even if the voluptuary is sometimes a poet and the worldling often an honest man, they both lack reason so entirely that reflection revolts equally against the life of both. Vanity, vanity, is their common epitaph. Now, at the soul's christening and initiation into the life of reason, the first vow must always be to " renounce the

pomps and vanities of this wicked world." A person to whom this means nothing is one to whom, in the end, nothing has meaning. He has not conceived a highest good, no ultimate goal is within his horizon, and it has never occurred to him to ask what he is living for. With all his pompous soberness, the worldly man is fundamentally frivolous ; with all his maxims and cant estimations he is radically inane. He conforms to religion without suspecting what religion means, not being in the least open to such an inquiry. He judges art like a parrot, without having ever stopped to evoke an image. He preaches about service and duty without any recognition of natural demands or any standard of betterment. His moral life is one vast anacoluthon in which the final term is left out that might have given sense to the whole, one vast ellipsis in which custom seems to bridge the chasm left between ideas. He denies the values of sense because they tempt to truancies from mechanical activity ; the values of reason he necessarily ignores because they lie beyond his scope. He adheres to conventional maxims and material quantitative standards ; his production is therefore, as far as he himself is concerned, an essential waste and his activity an essential tedium. If at least, like the sensualist, he enjoyed the process and expressed his fancy in his life, there would be something gained ; and this sort of gain, though overlooked in the worldling's maxims, all of which have a categorical tone, is really what often lends his life some propriety and spirit. Business and war and any customary task may come to form, so to speak, an organ whose natural function will be just that operation, and the most abstract and secondary activity, like that of adding figures or reading advertisements, may in this way become the one function proper to some soul. There are Nibelungen dwelling by choice underground and happy pedants in the upper air.

Facts are not wanting for these pillars of society to take solace in, if they wish to defend their philosophy. The time will come, astronomers say, when life will be extinct upon this weary planet. All the delights of sense and imagination will be over. It is these that will have turned out to be vain. But the masses of matter which

the worldlings have transformed with their machinery, and carried from one place to another, will remain to bear witness of them. The collocation of atoms will never be what it would have been if their feet had less continually beaten the earth. They may have the proud happiness of knowing that, when nothing that the spirit values endures, the earth may still sometimes, because of them, cast a slightly different shadow across the craters of the moon.

The sensualist at least is not worldly, and though his nature be atrophied in all its higher part, there is not lacking, as we have seen, a certain internal and abstract spirituality in his experience. He is a sort of sprightly and incidental mystic, treating his varied succession of little worlds as the mystic does his monotonous universe. Sense, moreover, is capable of many refinements, by which physical existence becomes its own reward. In the disciplined play of fancy which the fine arts afford, the mind's free action justifies itself and becomes intrinsically delightful. Science not only exercises in itself the intellectual powers, but assimilates nature to the mind, so that all things may nourish it. In love and friendship the liberal life extends also to the heart. All these interests, which justify themselves by their intrinsic fruits, make so many rational episodes and patches in conventional life; but it must be confessed in all candour that these are but oases in the desert, and that as the springs of life are irrational, so its most vehement and prevalent interests remain irrational to the end. When the pleasures of sense and art, of knowledge and sympathy, are stretched to the utmost, what part will they cover and justify of our passions, our industry, our governments, our religion?

CI

MORAL WAR

In moral reprobation there is often a fanatical element, I mean that hatred which an animal may sometimes feel for other animals on account of their strange aspect, or because their habits put him to serious inconvenience, or

because these habits, if he himself adopted them, might be vicious in him. Such aversion, however, is not a rational sentiment. No fault can be justly found with a creature merely for not resembling another, or for flourishing in a different physical or moral environment. It has been an unfortunate consequence of mythical philosophies that moral emotions have been stretched to objects with which a man has only physical relations, so that the universe has been filled with monsters more or less horrible, according as the forces they represented were more or less formidable to human life. In the same spirit, every experiment in civilization has passed for a crime among those engaged in some other experiment. The foreigner has seemed an insidious rascal, the heretic a pestilent sinner, and any material obstacle a literal devil; while to possess some unusual passion, however innocent, has brought obloquy on every one unfortunate enough not to be constituted like the average of his neighbours. The physical repulsion, however, which everybody feels to habits and interests which he is incapable of sharing, is no part of rational estimation, large as its share may be in the fierce prejudices and superstitions which pre-rational morality abounds in. The strongest feelings assigned to the conscience are not moral feelings at all; they express merely physical antipathies.

Toward alien powers a man's true weapon is not invective, but skill and strength. An obstacle is an obstacle, not a devil; and even a moral life, when it actually exists in a being with hostile activities, is merely a hostile power. It is not hostile, however, in so far as it is moral, but only in so far as its morality represents a material organism, physically incompatible with what the thinker has at heart.

Material conflicts cannot be abolished by reason, because reason is powerful only where they have been removed. Yet where opposing forces are able mutually to comprehend and respect one another, common ideal interests at once supervene, and though the material conflict may remain irrepressible, it will be overlaid by an intellectual life, partly common and unanimous. In this lies the chivalry of war, that we acknowledge the right of others to pursue ends contrary to our own. Competitors who are able to

feel this ideal comity, and who leading different lives in the flesh lead the same life in imagination, are incited by their mutual understanding to rise above that material ambition, perhaps gratuitous, that has made them enemies. They may ultimately wish to renounce that temporal good which deprives them of spiritual goods in truth infinitely greater and more appealing to the soul—innocence, justice, and intelligence. They may prefer an enlarged mind to enlarged frontiers, and the comprehension of things foreign to the destruction of them. They may even aspire to detachment from those private interests which, as Plato said, do not deserve to be taken too seriously; the fact that we must take them seriously being the ignoble part of our condition.

Of course such renunciations, to be rational, must not extend to the whole material basis of life, since some physical particularity and efficiency are requisite for bringing into being that very rationality which is to turn enemies into friends. The need of a material basis for spirit is what renders partial war with parts of the world the inevitable background of charity and justice. The frontiers at which this warfare is waged may, however, be pushed back indefinitely. Within the sphere organized about a firm and generous life a Roman peace can be established. It is not what is assimilated that saps a creative will, but what remains outside that ultimately invades and disrupts it. In exact proportion to its vigour, it wins over former enemies, civilizes the barbarian, and even tames the viper, when the eye is masterful and sympathetic enough to dispel hatred and fear. The more rational an institution is the less it suffers by making concessions to others; for these concessions, being just, propagate its essence. The ideal commonwealth can extend to the limit at which such concessions cease to be just and are thereby detrimental. Beyond or below that limit strife must continue for physical ascendancy, so that the power and the will to be reasonable may not be undermined. Reason is an operation in nature, and has its root there. Saints cannot arise where there have been no warriors, nor philosophers where a prying beast does not remain hidden in the depths.

Perhaps the art of politics, if it were practised scientific-

ally, might obviate open war, religious enmities, industrial competition, and human slavery; but it would certainly not leave a free field for all animals nor for all monstrosities in men. Even while admitting the claims of monsters to be treated humanely, reason could not suffer them to absorb those material resources which might be needed to maintain rational society at its highest efficiency. We cannot, at this immense distance from a rational social order, judge what concessions individual genius would be called upon to make in a system of education and government in which all attainable goods should be pursued scientifically. Concessions would certainly be demanded, if not from well-trained wills, still from inevitable instincts, reacting on inevitable accidents. There is tragedy in perfection, because the universe in which perfection arises is itself imperfect. Accidents will always continue to harass the most consummate organism; they will flow in both from the outer world and from the interstices, so to speak, of its own machinery; for a rational life touches the irrational at its core as well as at its periphery. In both directions it meets physical force and can subsist only by exercising physical force in return. The range of rational ethics is limited to the intermediate political zone, in which existences have attained some degree of natural unanimity.

It should be added, perhaps, that the frontiers between moral and physical action are purely notional. Real existences do not lie wholly on one or the other side of them. Every man, every material object, has moral affinities enveloping an indomitable vital nucleus or brute personal kernel; this moral essence is enveloped in turn by untraceable relations, radiating to infinity over the natural world. The stars enter society by the light and knowledge they afford, the time they keep, and the ornament they lavish; but they are mere dead weights in their substance and cosmological puzzles in their destiny. You and I possess manifold ideal bonds in the interests we share; but each of us has his poor body and his irremediable, incommunicable dreams. Beyond the little span of his foresight and love, each is merely a physical agency, preparing the way quite irresponsibly for undreamt-of revolutions and alien lives.

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ORIGIN OF TYRANNY

THE inertia which physics registers in the first law of motion, natural history and psychology call habit. In society it takes the form of custom, which when codified is called law and when enforced is called government. Government is the political representative of a natural equilibrium, of custom, of inertia; it is by no means a representative of reason. But like any mechanical complication it may become rational, and many of its forms and operations may be defended on rational grounds.

Suppose a cold and hungry savage, failing to find berries and game enough in the woods, should descend into some meadow where a flock of sheep were grazing and pounce upon a lame lamb which could not run away with the others, tear its flesh, suck up its blood, and dress himself in its skin. All this could not be called an affair undertaken in the sheep's interest. And yet it might well conduce to their interest in the end. For the savage, finding himself soon hungry again, and insufficiently warm in that scanty garment, might attack the flock a second time, and thereby begin to accustom himself, and also his delighted family, to a new and more substantial sort of raiment and diet. Suppose, now, a pack of wolves, or a second savage, or a disease should attack those unhappy sheep. Would not their primeval enemy defend them? Would he not have identified himself with their interests to this extent, that their total extinction or discomfiture would alarm him also? And in so far as he provided for their well-being, would he not have become a good shepherd? If, now, some philosophic wether, a lover of his kind, reasoned with his fellows upon the change in their condition, he might shudder indeed at those early episodes d at the contribution of lambs and fleeces which would not cease to be levied by the new government; but he might also consider that such a contribution was nothing in comparison with what was formerly exacted by wolves, diseases, frosts, and casual robbers, when the flock was

much smaller than it had now grown to be, and much less able to withstand decimation. And he might even have conceived an admiration for the remarkable wisdom and beauty of that great shepherd, dressed in such a wealth of wool; and he might remember pleasantly some occasional caress received from him and the daily trough filled with water by his providential hand. And he might not be far from maintaining not only the rational origin, but the divine right of shepherds.

Such a savage enemy, incidentally turned into a useful master, is called a conqueror or king. His government is nothing but a chronic raid, mitigated by the desire to leave the inhabitants prosperous enough to be continually despoiled afresh. At first an army is simply a ravenous and lusty horde quartered in a conquered country; yet the cost of such an incubus may come to be regarded as an insurance against further attack, and so what is in its real basis an inevitable burden resulting from a chance balance of forces may be justified in after-thought as a rational device for defensive purposes. Such an ulterior justification has nothing to do, however, with the causes that maintain armies or military policies: and accordingly those virginal minds that think things originated in the uses they may have acquired, have frequent cause to be pained and perplexed at the abuses and over-development of militarism. The constant compensation tyranny brings, which keeps it from at once exhausting its victims, is the silence it imposes on their private squabbles. One distant universal enemy may be less oppressive than a thousand unchecked pilferers and plotters at home.

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WAR

To fight is a radical instinct; if men have nothing else to fight over they will fight over words, fancies, or women, or they will fight because they dislike each other's looks, or because they have met walking in opposite directions. To knock a thing down, especially if it is cocked at an

arrogant angle, is a deep delight to the blood. To fight for a reason and in a calculating spirit is something your true warrior despises; even a coward might screw his courage up to such a reasonable conflict. The joy and glory of fighting lie in its pure spontaneity and consequent generosity; you are not fighting for gain, but for sport and for victory. Victory, no doubt, has its fruits for the victor. If fighting were not a possible means of livelihood the bellicose instinct could never have established itself in any long-lived race. A few men can live on plunder, just as there is room in the world for some beasts of prey; other men are reduced to living on industry, just as there are diligent bees, ants, and herbivorous kine. But victory need have no good fruits for the people whose army is victorious. That it sometimes does so is an ulterior and blessed circumstance hardly to be reckoned upon.

Since barbarism has its pleasures it naturally has its apologists. There are panegyrists of war who say that without a periodical bleeding a race decays and loses its manhood. Experience is directly opposed to this shameless assertion. It is war that wastes a nation's wealth, chokes its industries, kills its flower, narrows its sympathies, condemns it to be governed by adventurers, and leaves the puny, deformed, and unmanly to breed the next generation. Internecine war, foreign and civil, brought about the greatest set-back which the life of reason has ever suffered; it exterminated the Greek and Italian aristocracies. Instead of being descended from heroes, modern nations are descended from slaves; and it is not their bodies only that show it. After a long peace, if the conditions of life are propitious, we observe a people's energies bursting their barriers; they become aggressive on the strength they have stored up in their remote and unchecked development. It is the unmutilated race, fresh from the struggle with nature (in which the best survive, while in war it is often the best that perish), that descends victoriously into the arena of nations and conquers disciplined armies at the first blow, becomes the military aristocracy of the next epoch and is itself ultimately sapped and decimated by luxury and battle, and merged at last into the ignoble conglomerate beneath. Then, perhaps, in some other

virgin country a genuine humanity is again found, capable of victory because unbled by war. To call war the soil of courage and virtue is like calling debauchery the soil of love.

Blind courage is an animal virtue indispensable in a world full of dangers and evils where a certain insensibility and dash are requisite to skirt the precipice without vertigo. Such animal courage seems therefore beautiful rather than desperate or cruel, and being the lowest and most instinctive of virtues it is the one most widely and sincerely admired. In the form of steadiness under risks rationally taken, and perseverance so long as there is a chance of success, courage is a true virtue ; but it ceases to be one when the love of danger, a useful passion when danger is unavoidable, begins to lead men into evils which it was unnecessary to face. Bravado, provocativeness, and a gambler's instinct, with a love of hitting hard for the sake of exercise, is a temper which ought already to be counted among the vices rather than the virtues of man. To delight in war is a merit in the soldier, a dangerous quality in the captain, and a positive crime in the statesman.

The panegyrist of war places himself on the lowest level on which a moralist or patriot can stand and shows as great a want of refined feeling as of right reason. For the glories of war are all blood-stained, delirious, and infected with crime ; the combative instinct is a savage prompting by which one man's good is found in another's evil. The existence of such a contradiction in the moral world is the original sin of nature, whence flows every other wrong. He is a willing accomplice of that perversity in things who delights in another's discomfiture or in his own, and craves the blind tension of plunging into danger without reason, or the idiot's pleasure in facing a pure chance. To find joy in another's trouble is, as man is constituted, not unnatural, though it is wicked ; and to find joy in one's own trouble, though it be madness, is not yet impossible for man. These are the chaotic depths of that dreaming nature out of which humanity has to grow.

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PATRIOTISM

PATRIOTISM is a form of piety. It is right to prefer our own country to all others because we are children and citizens before we can be travellers or philosophers. Specific character is a necessary point of origin for universal relations: a pure nothing can have no radiation and no scope. It is no accident for the soul to be embodied: her very essence is to express and bring to fruition the functions and resources of the body. Its instincts sustain her ideals and its relations her world. A native country is a sort of second body, another enveloping organism to give the will definition. A specific inheritance strengthens the soul. Cosmopolitanism has doubtless its place, because a man may well cultivate in himself, and represent in his nation, affinities to other peoples, and such assimilation to them as is compatible with personal integrity and clearness of purpose. Plasticity to things foreign need not be inconsistent with happiness and utility at home. But happiness and utility are possible nowhere to a man who represents nothing and who looks out on the world without a plot of his own to stand on, either on earth or in heaven. He wanders from place to place, a voluntary exile, always querulous, always uneasy, always alone. His very criticisms express no ideal. His experience is without sweetness, without cumulative fruits, and his children, if he has them, are without morality. For reason and happiness are like other flowers—they wither when plucked. On the other hand, to be always harping on nationality is to convert what should be a recognition of natural conditions into a ridiculous pride in one's own oddities. Nature has hidden the roots of things, and though botany must now and then dig them up for the sake of comprehension, their place is still under ground. A man's feet must be planted in his country, but his eyes should survey the world.

Where parties and governments are bad, as they are in most ages and countries, it makes practically no difference to a community, apart from local ravages, whether its own

army or the enemy's is victorious in war, nor does it really affect any man's welfare whether the party he happens to belong to is in office or not. These issues concern, in such cases, only the army itself, whose lives and fortunes are at stake, or the official classes, who lose their places when their leaders fall from power. The private citizen in any event continues in such countries to pay a maximum of taxes and to suffer, in all his private interests, a maximum of vexation and neglect. Nevertheless, because he has some son at the front, some cousin in the government, or some historical sentiment for the flag and the nominal essence of his country, the oppressed subject will glow like the rest with patriotic ardour, and will decry as dead to duty and honour any one who points out how perverse is this helpless allegiance to a government representing no public interest.

In proportion as governments become good and begin to operate for the general welfare, patriotism itself becomes representative and an expression of reason; but just in the same measure does hostility to that government on the part of foreigners become groundless and perverse. A competitive patriotism involves ill-will toward all other states and a secret and constant desire to see them thrashed and subordinated. It follows that a good government, while it justifies this governmental patriotism in its subjects, disallows it in all other men. For a good government is an international benefit, and the prosperity and true greatness of any country is a boon sooner or later to the whole world; it may eclipse alien governments and draw away local populations or industries, but it necessarily benefits alien individuals in so far as it is allowed to affect them at all.

Animosity against a well-governed country is therefore madness. A rational patriotism would rather take the form of imitating and supporting that so-called foreign country, and even, if practicable, of fusing with it. The invidious and aggressive form of patriotism, though inspired generally only by local conceit, would nevertheless be really justified if such conceit happened to be well grounded. A dream of universal predominance visiting a truly virtuous and intelligent people would be an aspiration toward universal beneficence. For every man who is governed at all must be governed by others; the point

is, that the others, in ruling him, shall help him to be himself and give scope to his congenial activities. When coerced in that direction he obeys a force which, in the best sense of the word, *represents* him, and consequently he is truly free; nor could he be ruled by a more native and rightful authority than by one that divines and satisfies his true necessities.

A man's nature is not, however, a quantity or quality fixed unalterably and *a priori*. As breeding and selection improve a race, so every experience modifies the individual and offers a changed basis for future experience. The language, religion, education, and prejudices acquired in youth bias character and predetermine the directions in which development may go on. A child might possibly change his country; a man can only wish that he might change it. Therefore, among the true interests which a government should represent, nationality itself must be included.

Mechanical forces, we must not weary of repeating, do not come merely to vitiate the ideal; they come to create it. The historical background of life is a part of its substance, and the ideal can never grow independently of its spreading roots. A sanctity hangs about the sources of our being, whether physical, social, or imaginary. The ancients who kissed the earth on returning to their native country expressed nobly and passionately what every man feels for those regions and those traditions whence the sap of his own life has been sucked in. There is a profound friendliness in whatever revives primordial habits, however they may have been overlaid with later sophistications. For this reason the homelier words of a mother tongue, the more familiar assurances of an ancestral religion, and the very savour of childhood's dishes, remain always a potent means to awaken emotion. Such ingrained influences, in their vague totality, make a man's true nationality. A government, in order to represent the general interests of its subjects, must move in sympathy with their habits and memories; it must respect their idiosyncrasy for the same reason that it protects their lives. If parting from a single object of love be, as it is, true dying, how much more would a shifting of all the affections be death to the soul.

Man is certainly an animal that, when he lives at all, lives for ideals. Something must be found to occupy his imagination, to raise pleasure and pain into love and hatred, and change the prosaic alternative between comfort and discomfort into the tragic one between happiness and sorrow. Now that the hue of daily adventure is so dull, when religion for the most part is so vague and accommodating, when even war is a vast impersonal business, nationality seems to have slipped into the place of honour. It has become the one eloquent, public, intrepid illusion. Illusion, I mean, when it is taken for an ultimate good or a mystical essence, for of course nationality is a fact. People speak some particular language and are very uncomfortable where another is spoken or where their own is spoken differently. They have habits, judgments, assumptions to which they are wedded, and a society where all this is unheard of shocks them and puts them at a galling disadvantage. To ignorant people the foreigner as such is ridiculous, unless he is superior to them in numbers or prestige, when he becomes hateful. It is natural for a man to like to live at home, and to live long elsewhere without a sense of exile is not good for his moral integrity. It is right to feel a greater kinship and affection for what lies nearest to oneself. But this necessary fact and even duty of nationality is accidental; like age or sex it is a physical fatality which can be made the basis of specific and comely virtues; but it is not an end to pursue, or a flag to flaunt, or a privilege not balanced by a thousand incapacities. Yet of this distinction our contemporaries tend to make an idol, perhaps because it is the only distinction they feel they have left.

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INDUSTRIAL IDEALISM

A PEOPLE once having become industrial will hardly be happy if sent back to Arcadia; it will have formed busy habits which it cannot relax without tedium; it will have developed a restlessness and avidity which will crave

matter, like any other kind of hunger. Every experiment in living qualifies the initial possibilities of life, and the moralist would reckon without his host if he did not allow for the change which forced exercise makes in instinct, adjusting it more or less to extant conditions originally, perhaps, unwelcome. It is too late for the highest good to prescribe flying for quadrupeds or peace for the sea waves. Knowledge of what is possible is the beginning of happiness.

The acceptable side of industrialism, which is supposed to be inspired exclusively by utility, is not utility at all but pure achievement. If we wish to do such an age justice we must judge it as we should a child and praise its feats without inquiring after its purposes. That is its own spirit: a spirit dominant at the present time, particularly in America, where industrialism appears most free from alloy. There is a curious delight in turning things over, changing their shape, discovering their possibilities, making of them some new contrivance. Use, in these experimental minds, as in nature, is only incidental. There is an irrational creative impulse, a zest in novelty, in progression, in beating the other man, or, as they say, in breaking the record. There is also a fascination in seeing the world unbosom itself of ancient secrets, obey man's coaxing, and take on unheard-of shapes. The highest building, the largest steamer, the fastest train, the book reaching the widest circulation have, in America, a clear title to respect. When the just functions of things are as yet not discriminated, the superlative in any direction seems naturally admirable. Again, many possessions, if they do not make a man better, are at least expected to make his children happier; and this pathetic hope is behind many exertions. An experimental materialism, spontaneous and divorced from reason and from everything useful, is also confused in some minds with traditional duties; and a school of popular hierophants is not lacking that turns it into a sort of religion and perhaps calls it idealism. Impulse is more visible in all this than purpose, imagination more than judgment; but it is pleasant for the moment to abound in invention and effort and to let the future cash the account.

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COLLECTIVISM

IDEAL patriotism is not secured when each man, although without natural eminence, pursues his private interests. What renders man an imaginative and moral being is that in society he gives new aims to his life which could not have existed in solitude : the aims of friendship, religion, science, and art. All these aims, in a well-knit state, are covered by the single passion of patriotism ; and then a conception of one's country, its history and mission, becomes the touchstone of every ideal impulse. Democracy requires this kind of patriotism in everybody ; so that if public duty is not to become a sacrifice imposed on the many for the sake of the few, as in aristocracy, the reason can only be that the many covet, appreciate, and appropriate their country's ideal glories, quite as much as the favoured class ever could in any aristocracy.

Is this possible ? What might happen if the human race were immensely improved and exalted there is as yet no saying ; but experience has given no example of efficacious devotion to communal ideals except in small cities, held together by close military and religious bonds and having no important relations to anything external. Even this antique virtue was short-lived and sadly thwarted by private and party passion. Where public spirit has held best, as at Sparta or (to take a very different type of communal passion) among the Jesuits, it has been paid for by a notable lack of spontaneity and wisdom ; such inhuman devotion to an arbitrary end has made these societies odious. We may say, therefore, that a zeal sufficient to destroy selfishness is, as men are now constituted, worse than selfishness itself. In pursuing prizes for themselves people benefit their fellows more than in pursuing such narrow and irrational ideals as alone seem to be powerful in the world. To ambition, to the love of wealth and honour, to love of a liberty which meant opportunity for experiment and adventure, we owe whatever benefits we have derived from Greece and Rome, from

Italy and England. It is doubtful whether a society which offered no personal prizes would inspire effort; and it is still more doubtful whether that effort, if actually stimulated by education, would be beneficent. For an indoctrinated and collective virtue turns easily to fanaticism; it imposes irrational sacrifices prompted by some abstract principle or habit once, perhaps, useful; but that convention soon becomes superstitious and ceases to represent general human excellence.

Individualism is in one sense the only possible ideal; for whatever social order may be most valuable can be valuable only for its effect on conscious individuals. Man is, of course, a social animal and needs society, first that he may come safely into being, and then that he may have something interesting to do. But society itself is no animal and has neither instincts, interests, nor ideals. To talk of such things is either to speak metaphorically or to think mythically; and myths, the more currency they acquire, pass the more easily into superstitions. It would be a gross and pedantic superstition to venerate any form of society in itself, apart from the safety, breadth, or sweetness which it lent to individual happiness. If the individual may be justly subordinated to the state, not merely for the sake of a future freer generation, but permanently and in the ideal society, the reason is simply that such subordination is a part of a man's natural devotion to things rational and impersonal, in the presence of which alone he can be personally happy. Society in its future and in its past is a natural object of interest like art or science; it exists, like them, because only when lost in such rational objects can a free soul be active and immortal. But all these ideals are terms in some actual life, not alien ends, important to nobody, to which, notwithstanding, everybody is to be sacrificed.

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CHRISTIAN MORALITY

THE Jews, without dreaming of any inherent curse in being finite, had found themselves often in the sorest material straits. They hoped, like all primitive peoples, that relief

might come by propitiating the deity. They knew that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children even to the third and fourth generation. They had accepted this idea of joint responsibility and vicarious atonement, turning in their unphilosophical way this law of nature into a principle of justice. Meantime the failure of all their cherished ambitions had plunged them into a penitential mood. Though in fact pious and virtuous to a fault, they still looked for repentance—their own or the world's—to save them. This redemption was to be accomplished in the Hebrew spirit, through long-suffering and devotion to the Law, with the Hebrew solidarity, by vicarious attribution of merits and demerits within the household of the faith.

Such a way of conceiving redemption was far more dramatic, poignant, and individual than the Neo-Platonic; hence it was far more popular and better fitted to be a nucleus for religious devotion. However much, therefore, Christianity may have insisted on renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, it always kept in the background this perfectly Jewish and pre-rational craving for a delectable promised land. The journey might be long and through a desert, but milk and honey were to flow in the oasis beyond. Had renunciation been fundamental or revulsion from nature complete, there would have been no much-trumpeted last judgment and no material kingdom of heaven. The renunciation was only temporary and partial; the revulsion was only against incidental evils. Despair touched nothing but the present order of the world, though at first it took the extreme form of calling for its immediate destruction. This was the sort of despair and renunciation that lay at the bottom of Christian repentance; while hope in a new order of this world, or of one very like it, lay at the bottom of Christian joy. A temporary sacrifice, it was thought, and a partial mutilation would bring the spirit miraculously into a fresh paradise. The pleasures nature had grudged or punished, grace was to offer as a reward for faith and patience. The earthly life which was vain as a possession was to be profitable as a trial. Normal experience, appropriate exercise for the spirit, would thereafter begin.

Christianity is thus a system of postponed rationalism,

a rationalism intercepted by a supernatural version of the conditions of happiness. Its moral principle is reason—the only moral principle there is; its motive power is the impulse and natural hope to be and to be happy. Christianity merely renews and reinstates these universal principles after a first disappointment and a first assault of despair, by opening up new vistas of accomplishment, new qualities and measures of success. The Christian field of action being a world of grace enveloping the world of nature, many transitory reversals of acknowledged values may take place in its code. Poverty, chastity, humility, obedience, self-sacrifice, ignorance, sickness, and dirt may all acquire a religious worth which reason, in its direct application, might scarcely have found in them; yet these reversed appreciations are merely incidental to a secret rationality, and are justified on the ground that human nature, as now found, is corrupt and needs to be purged and transformed before it can safely manifest its congenital instincts and become again an authoritative criterion of values. In the kingdom of God men would no longer need to do penance, for life there would be truly natural and there the soul would be at last in her native sphere.

This submerged optimism exists in Christianity, being a heritage from the Jews; and those Protestant communities that have rejected the pagan and Platonic elements that overlaid it have little difficulty in restoring it to prominence. Not, however, without abandoning the soul of the gospel; for the soul of the gospel, though expressed in the language of Messianic hopes, is really post-rational. It was not to marry and be given in marriage, or to sit on thrones, or to unravel metaphysical mysteries, or to enjoy any of the natural delights renounced in this life, that Christ summoned his disciples to abandon all they had and to follow him. There was surely a deeper peace in his self-surrender. It was not a new thing even among the Jews to use the worldly promises of their exoteric religion as symbols for inner spiritual revolutions; and the change of heart involved in genuine Christianity was not a fresh excitation of gaudy hopes, nor a new sort of utilitarian, temporary austerity. It was an emptying of the will, in respect to all human desires, so that a perfect charity and

contemplative justice, falling like the Father's gifts ungrudgingly on the whole creation, might take the place of ambition, petty morality, and earthly desires. It was a renunciation which, at least in Christ himself and in his more spiritual disciples, did not spring from disappointed illusion or lead to other unregenerate illusions even more sure to be dispelled by events. It sprang rather from a native speculative depth, a natural affinity to the divine fecundity, serenity, and sadness of the world. It was the spirit of prayer, the kindliness and insight which a pure soul can fetch from contemplation.

This mystical detachment, supervening on the dogged old Jewish optimism, gave Christianity a double aspect, and had some curious consequences in later times. Those who were inwardly convinced—as most religious minds were under the Roman Empire—that all earthly things were vanity, and that they plunged the soul into an abyss of nothingness if not of torment, could, in view of brighter possibilities in another world, carry their asceticism and their cult of suffering farther than a purely negative system, like the Buddhistic, would have allowed. For a discipline that is looked upon as merely temporary can contradict nature more boldly than one intended to take nature's place. The hope of unimaginable benefits to ensue could drive religion to greater frenzies than it could have fallen into if its object had been merely to silence the will. Christianity persecuted, tortured, and burned. Like a hound it tracked the very scent of heresy. It kindled wars, and nursed furious hatreds and ambitions. It sanctified, quite like Mohammedanism, extermination and tyranny. All this would have been impossible if, like Buddhism, it had looked only to peace and the liberation of souls. It looked beyond; it dreamt of infinite blisses and crowns it should be crowned with before an electrified universe and an applauding God. These were rival baits to those which the world fishes with, and were snapped at, when seen, with no less avidity. Man, far from being freed from his natural passions, was plunged into artificial ones quite as violent and much more disappointing. Buddhism had tried to quiet a sick world with anæsthetics; Christianity sought to purge it with fire.

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SUPERNATURALISM

THE most plausible evidence which a revealed doctrine can give of its truth is the beauty and rationality of its moral corollaries. It is instructive to observe that the congruity of a gospel with natural reason and common humanity is regarded as the decisive mark of its supernatural origin. Indeed, were inspiration not the faithful echo of plain conscience and vulgar experience, there would be no means of distinguishing it from madness. Whatever poetic idea a prophet starts with, in whatever intuition or analogy he finds a hint of salvation, it is altogether necessary that he should hasten to interpret his oracle in such a manner that it may sanction without disturbing the system of indispensable natural duties, although these natural duties, by being attached artificially to supernatural dogmas, may take on a different tone, justify themselves by a different rhetoric, and possibly suffer real transformation in some minor particulars. Systems of post-rational morality are not original works: they are versions of natural morality translated into different metaphysical languages, each of which adds its peculiar flavour, its own genius and poetry, to the plain sense of the common original.

Faith in the supernatural is a desperate wager made by man at the lowest ebb of his fortunes; it is as far as possible from being the source of that normal vitality which subsequently, if his fortunes mend, he may gradually recover. Under the same religion, with the same posthumous alternatives and mystic harmonies hanging about them, different races, or the same race at different periods, will manifest the most opposite moral characteristics. Belief in a thousand hells and heavens will not lift the apathetic out of apathy or hold back the passionate from passion; while a newly planted and ungalled community, in blessed forgetfulness of rewards or punishments, of cosmic needs or celestial sanctions, will know how to live cheerily and virtuously for life's own sake, putting to shame those thin vaticinations. To hope for a second life, to be

had gratis, merely because the present life has lost its savour, or to dream of a different world, because nature seems too intricate and unfriendly, is in the end merely to play with words; since the supernatural has no permanent aspect or charm except in so far as it expresses man's earthly situation and points to the satisfaction of his natural interests. What keeps supernatural morality, in its better forms, within the limits of sanity is the fact that it reinstates in practice, under novel associations and for motives ostensibly different, the very natural virtues and hopes which, when seen to be merely natural, it had thrown over with contempt. The new dispensation itself, if treated in the same spirit, would be no less contemptible; and what makes it genuinely esteemed is the restored authority of those human ideals which it expresses in a fable.

The extent of this moral restoration, the measure in which nature is suffered to bloom in the sanctuary, determines the value of post-rational moralities. They may preside over a good life, personal or communal, when their symbolism, though cumbrous, is not deceptive: when the supernatural machinery brings man back to nature through mystical circumlocutions. The peculiar accent and emphasis which it will not cease to impose on the obvious lessons of life need not then repel the wisest intelligence. True sages and true civilizations can accordingly flourish under a dispensation nominally supernatural; for that supernaturalism may have become a mere form in which imagination clothes a rational and humane wisdom.

People who speak only one language have some difficulty in conceiving that things should be expressed just as well in some other; a prejudice which does not necessarily involve their mistaking words for things or being practically misled by their inflexible vocabulary. So it constantly happens that supernatural systems, when they have long prevailed, are defended by persons who have only natural interests at heart; because these persons lack that speculative freedom and dramatic imagination which would allow them to conceive other moulds for morality and happiness than those to which a respectable tradition has

accustomed them. Sceptical statesmen and academic scholars sometimes suffer from this kind of numbness; it is intelligible that they should mistake the forms of culture for its principle, especially when their genius is not original and their chosen function is to defend and propagate the local traditions in which their whole training has immersed them. Indeed, in the political field, such concern for decaying myths may have a pathetic justification; for however little the life or dignity of man may be jeopardized by changes in language, languages themselves are not indifferent things. They may be closely bound up with the peculiar history and spirit of nations, and their disappearance, however necessary and on the whole propitious, may mark the end of some stirring chapter in the world's history. Those whose vocation is not philosophy and whose country is not the world may be pardoned for wishing to retard the migrations of spirit, and for looking forward with apprehension to a future in which their private enthusiasms will not be understood.

The value of post-rational morality, then, depends on a double conformity on its part with the life of reason. In the first place some natural impulse must be retained, some partial ideal must still be trusted and pursued by the prophet of redemption. In the second place the intuition thus gained and exclusively put forward must be made the starting-point for a restored natural morality. Otherwise the faith appealed to would be worthless in its operation, as well as fanciful in its basis, and it could never become a mould for thought or action in a civilized society.

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POST-RATIONAL MORALITY

Pessimism, and all the moralities founded on despair, are post-rational. They are the work of men who more or less explicitly have conceived the life of reason, tried it at least imaginatively, and found it wanting. These systems are a refuge from an intolerable situation: they are experiments in redemption. As a matter of fact, animal

instincts and natural standards of excellence are never eluded in them, for no moral experience has other terms ; but the part of the natural ideal which remains active appears in opposition to all the rest and, by an intelligible illusion, seems to be no part of that natural ideal because, compared with the commoner passions on which it reacts, it represents some simpler or more attenuated hope—the appeal to some very humble or very much chastened satisfaction, or to an utter change in the conditions of life.

Post-rational morality thus constitutes, in intention if not in fact, a criticism of all experience. It thinks it does not make, like pre-rational morality, an arbitrary selection from among co-ordinate precepts. It is an effort to subordinate all precepts to one, that points to some single eventual good. For it occurs to the founders of these systems that by estranging oneself from the world, or resting in the moment's pleasure, or mortifying the passions, or enduring all sufferings in patience, or studying a perfect conformity with the course of affairs, one may gain admission to some sort of residual mystical paradise ; and this thought, once conceived, is published as a revelation and accepted as a panacea. It becomes in consequence (for such is the force of nature) the foundation of elaborate institutions and elaborate philosophies, into which the contents of the worldly life are gradually reintroduced.

When human life is in an acute crisis, the sick dreams that visit the soul are the only evidence of her continued existence. Through them she still envisages a good ; and when the delirium passes and the normal world gradually re-establishes itself in her regard, she attributes her regeneration to the ministry of those phantoms, a regeneration due, in truth, to the restored nutrition and circulation within her. In this way post-rational systems, though founded originally on despair, in a later age that has forgotten its disillusions may come to pose as the only possible basis of morality. The philosophers addicted to each sect, and brought up under its influence, may exhaust criticism and sophistry to show that all faith and effort would be vain unless their particular nostrum was accepted ; and so a curious party philosophy arises in which, after discrediting nature and reason in general, the sectary

puts forward some mythical echo of reason and nature as the one saving and necessary truth. The positive substance of such a doctrine is accordingly pre-rational and perhaps crudely superstitious; but it is introduced and nominally supported by a formidable indictment of physical and moral science, so that the wretched idol ultimately offered to our worship acquires a spurious halo and an imputed majesty by being raised on a pedestal of infinite despair.

110

THE NEED OF DISCIPLINE

There are a myriad conflicts in practice and in thought, conflicts between rival possibilities, knocking inopportunely and in vain at the door of existence. Owing to the initial disorganization of things, some demands continually prove to be incompatible with others arising no less naturally. Reason in such cases imposes real and irreparable sacrifices, but it brings a stable consolation if its discipline is accepted. Decay, for instance, is a moral and æsthetic evil; but being a natural necessity it can become the basis for pathetic and magnificent harmonies, when once imagination is adjusted to it. The hatred of change and death is ineradicable while life lasts, since it expresses that self-sustaining organization in a creature which we call its soul; yet this hatred of change and death is not so deeply seated in the nature of things as are death and change themselves, for the flux is deeper than the ideal. Discipline may attune our higher and more adaptable part to the harsh conditions of existence, and the resulting sentiment, being the only one which can be maintained successfully, will express the greatest satisfactions which can be reached, though not the greatest that might be conceived or desired. To be interested in the changing seasons is, in this middling zone, a happier state of mind than to be hopelessly in love with spring. Wisdom discovers these possible accommodations, as circumstances impose them; and education ought to prepare men to accept them.

It is for want of education and discipline that a man so often insists petulantly on his random tastes, instead of cultivating those which might find some satisfaction in the world and might produce in him some pertinent culture. Untutored self-assertion may even lead him to deny some fact that should have been patent, and plunge him into needless calamity. His Utopias cheat him in the end, if indeed the barbarous taste he has indulged in clinging to them does not itself lapse before the dream is half formed. So men have feverishly conceived a heaven only to find it insipid, and a hell to find it ridiculous. Theodicies that were to demonstrate an absolute cosmic harmony have turned the universe into a tyrannous nightmare, from which we are glad to awake again in this unintentional and somewhat tractable world. Thus the fancies of effeminate poets in violating science are false to the highest art, and the products of sheer confusion, instigated by the love of beauty, turn out to be hideous. A rational severity in respect to art simply weeds the garden; it expresses a mature æsthetic choice and opens the way to supreme artistic achievements. To keep beauty in its place is to make all things beautiful.

III

HAPPINESS

If pleasure, because it is commonly a result of satisfied instinct, may by a figure of speech be called the aim of impulse, happiness, by a like figure, may be called the aim of reason. The direct aim of reason is harmony; yet harmony, when made to rule in life, gives reason a noble satisfaction which we call happiness. Happiness is impossible and even inconceivable to a mind without scope and without pause, a mind driven by craving, pleasure, and fear. The moralists who speak disparagingly of happiness are less sublime than they think. In truth their philosophy is too lightly ballasted, too much fed on prejudice and quibbles, for happiness to fall within its range. Happiness implies resource and security; it can be achieved only by discipline. Your intuitive moralist

rejects discipline, at least discipline of the conscience; and he is punished by having no lien on wisdom. He trusts to the clash of blind forces in collision, being one of them himself. He demands that virtue should be partisan and unjust; and he dreams of crushing the adversary in some physical cataclysm.

Such groping enthusiasm is often innocent and romantic; it captivates us with its youthful spell. But it has no structure with which to resist the shocks of fortune, which it goes out so jauntily to meet. It turns only too often into vulgarity and worldliness. A snowflake is soon a smudge, and there is a deeper purity in the diamond. Happiness is hidden from a free and casual will; it belongs rather to one chastened by a long education and unfolded in an atmosphere of sacred and perfected institutions. It is discipline that renders men rational and capable of happiness, by suppressing without hatred what needs to be suppressed to attain a beautiful naturalness. Discipline discredits the random pleasures of illusion, hope, and triumph, and substitutes those which are self-reproductive, perennial, and serene, because they express an equilibrium maintained with reality. So long as the result of endeavour is partly unforeseen and unintentional, so long as the will is partly blind, the life of reason is still swaddled in ignominy and the animal barks in the midst of human discourse. Wisdom and happiness consist in having recast natural energies in the furnace of experience. Nor has this experience merely a repressive force. It enshrines the successful expressions of spirit as well as the shocks and vetoes of circumstance; it enables a man to know himself in knowing the world and to discover his ideal by the very ring, true or false, of fortune's coin.

It seldom occurs to modern moralists that theirs is the science of all good, and the art of attaining it; they think only of some set of categorical precepts or some theory of moral sentiments, abstracting altogether from the ideals reigning in society, in science, and in art. They deal with the secondary question, What ought I to do? without having answered the primary question, What ought to be? They attach morals to religion rather than to politics, and

this religion unhappily long ago ceased to be wisdom expressed in fancy in order to become superstition overlaid with reasoning. The basis is laid in authority rather than in human nature, and the goal in salvation rather than in happiness.

It is in the nature of things that those who are incapable of happiness should have no idea of it. Happiness is not for wild animals, who can only oscillate between apathy and passion. To be happy, even to conceive happiness, you must be reasonable or (if Nietzsche prefers the word) you must be tamed. You must have taken the measure of your powers, tasted the fruits of your passions, and learned your place in the world and what things in it can really serve you. To be happy you must be wise. This happiness is sometimes found instinctively, and then the rudest fanatic can hardly fail to see how lovely it is; but sometimes it comes of having learned something by experience (which empirical people never do) and involves some chastening and renunciation; but it is not less sweet for having this touch of holiness about it, and the spirit of it is healthy and beneficent. The nature of happiness, therefore, dawns upon philosophers when their wisdom begins to report the lessons of experience; an *a priori* philosophy can have no inkling of it.

112

DETACHMENT

We commonly become philosophers only after despairing of instinctive happiness, yet there is nothing impossible in the attainment of detachment through other channels. The immense is sublime as well as the terrible; and mere infinity of the object, like its hostile nature, can have the effect of making the mind recoil upon itself. Infinity, like hostility, removes us from things, and makes us conscious of our independence. The simultaneous view of many things, innumerable attractions felt together, produce equilibrium and indifference. Let an infinite panorama be suddenly unfolded; the will is instantly paralysed, and

the heart choked. It is impossible to desire everything at once, and when all is offered and approved, it is impossible to choose everything. In this suspense, the mind soars into a kind of heaven, benevolent but unmoved.

This is the attitude of all minds to which breadth of interest or length of years has brought balance and dignity. The sacerdotal quality of old age comes from this same sympathy in disinterestedness. Old men full of hurry and passion appear as fools, because we understand that their experience has not left enough mark upon their brain to qualify with the memory of other goods any object that may be now presented. We cannot venerate any one in whom appreciation is not divorced from desire. And this elevation and detachment of the heart need not follow upon any great disappointment; it is finest and sweetest where it is the gradual fruit of many affections now merged and mellowed into a natural piety. Indeed, we are able to frame our idea of the Deity on no other model.

While in contemplating the beautiful we find the perfection of life in our harmony with the object, in contemplating the sublime we find a purer and more inalienable perfection by defying all such harmony. The surprised enlargement of vision, the sudden escape from our ordinary interests and the identification of ourselves with something permanent and superhuman, something much more abstract and inalienable than our changing personality, all this carries us away from the private tragedies before us, and raises us into a sort of ecstasy. We escape from ourselves altogether, and live as it were in the object, energizing in imitation of its movement, and saying, "Be thou me, impetuous one!" This passage into what comes before us, to live its life, is indeed a characteristic of all perfect contemplation. But when in thus translating ourselves we rise and play a higher personage, feeling the exhilaration of a life freer and wilder than our own, then the experience is one of sublimity. The emotion comes not from the accidents we endure, but from the powers we conceive; we fail to sympathize with the struggling sailors because we sympathize too much with the wind and waves. And this mystical cruelty can

extend even to ourselves; we can so feel the fascination of the cosmic forces that engulf us as to take a fierce joy in the thought of our own destruction. We can identify ourselves with the abstractest essence of reality, and, raised to that height, despise the human accidents of our own nature. Lord, we say, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee. The sense of suffering disappears in the sense of life and the imagination overwhelms the understanding.

If we could count the stars, we should not weep before them. While we think we can change the drama of history, and of our own lives, we are not awed by our destiny. But when the evil is irreparable, when our life is lived, a strong spirit has the sublime resource of standing at bay and of surveying almost from the other world the vicissitudes of this.

113

THE PROFIT OF LIVING

If we attempt to remove from life all its evils, as the popular imagination has done at times, we shall find little but æsthetic pleasures remaining to constitute unalloyed happiness. The satisfactions of passion and appetite, in which we chiefly place earthly happiness, themselves take on an æsthetic tinge when we remove ideally the possibility of loss or variation. What could the Olympians honour in one another or the seraphim worship in God except the embodiment of eternal attributes, of essences which, like beauty, make us happy only in contemplation? The glory of heaven could not be otherwise symbolized than by light and music. Even the knowledge of truth, which the most sober theologians made the essence of the beatific vision, is an æsthetic delight; for when knowledge of the truth has no further practical utility, the truth becomes a landscape. The delight in it is imaginative and the value of it æsthetic.

This reduction of all values to immediate appreciations, to sensuous or vital activities, has struck even the minds most stubbornly moralistic. Only for them, instead of

leading to the liberation of æsthetic goods from practical entanglements and their establishment as the only pure and positive values in life, this analysis has led rather to the denial of all pure and positive goods altogether. Such thinkers naturally assume that moral values are intrinsic and supreme; and since many of these moral values would not arise but for the existence or imminence of physical evils, they embrace the paradox that without evil no good whatever is conceivable.

The harsh requirements of apologetics have no doubt helped them to this position, from which one breath of spring or the sight of one well-begotten creature should be enough to dislodge them. Their ethical temper and the fetters of their servile imagination forbid them to reconsider their original assumption and to conceive that morality is a means and not an end; that it is the price of human non-adaptation, and the consequence of the original sin of unfitness. It is the art of compressing human conduct within the narrow limits of the safe and possible. Remove danger, remove pain, remove the occasion of pity, and the need of morality is gone. To say "thou shalt not" would then be an impertinence.

But this elimination of precept would not be a cessation of life. The senses would still be open, the instincts would still operate, and lead all creatures to the haunts and occupations that befitted them. The variety of nature and the infinity of art, with the companionship of our fellows, would fill the leisure of that ideal existence. These are the elements of our positive happiness, the things which, amid a thousand vexations and vanities, make the clear profit of living.

The odious circumstances which make the attainment of many goods conditional on the perpetration of some evil, and which punish every virtue by some incapacity or some abuse,—these odious circumstances cannot rob any good of its natural sweetness, nor all goods together of their conceptual harmony. To the heart that has felt it and that is the true judge, every loss is irretrievable and every joy indestructible.

When we attain perfection of function we lose consciousness of the medium, to become more clearly conscious

of the result. The eye that does its duty gives no report of itself and has no sense of muscular tension or weariness; but it gives all the brighter and steadier image of the object seen. Consciousness is not lost when focussed, and the labour of vision is abolished in its fruition. So the musician, could he play so divinely as to be unconscious of his body, his instrument, and the very lapse of time, would be only the more absorbed in the harmony, more completely master of its unities and beauty. At such moments the body's long labour at last brings forth the soul. Life from its inception is simply some partial natural harmony raising its voice and bearing witness to its own existence; to perfect that harmony is to round out and intensify that life. This is the very secret of power, of joy, of intelligence. Not to have understood it is to have passed through life without understanding anything.

The perfection thus revealed is relative to our nature and faculties; if it were not, it could have no value for us. It is revealed to us in brief moments, but it is not for that reason an unstable or fantastic thing. Human attention inevitably flickers; we survey things in succession, and our acts of synthesis and our realization of fact are only occasional. This is the tenure of all our possessions; we are not uninterruptedly conscious of ourselves, our physical environment, our ruling passions, or our deepest conviction. What wonder, then, that we are not constantly conscious of that perfection which is the implicit ideal of all our preferences and desires? We view it only in parts, as passion or perception successively directs our attention to its various elements. Some of us never try to conceive it in its totality. Yet our whole life is an act of worship to this unknown divinity; every heartfelt prayer is offered before one or another of its images.

This ideal of perfection varies, indeed, but only with the variations of our nature of which it is the counterpart and entelechy. There is perhaps no more frivolous notion than that a good, once attained, loses all its value. The instability of our attention, the need of rest and repair in our organs, makes a round of objects necessary to our minds; but we turn from a beautiful thing, as from a

truth or a friend, only to return incessantly, and with increasing appreciation. Nor do we lose all the benefit of our achievements in the intervals between our vivid realizations of what we have gained. The tone of the mind is permanently raised ; and we live with that general sense of steadfastness and resource, which is perhaps the kernel of happiness. Knowledge, affection, religion, and beauty are not less constant influences in a man's life because his consciousness of them is intermittent. Even when absent, they fill the chambers of the mind with a kind of fragrance. They have a continual efficacy, as well as a perennial worth.

114

BEAUTY A HINT OF HAPPINESS

Beauty as we feel it is something indescribable : what it is or what it means can never be said. It is an affection of the soul, a consciousness of joy and security, a pang, a dream, a pure pleasure. It suffuses an object without telling why ; nor has it any need to ask the question. It justifies itself and the vision it gilds ; nor is there any meaning in seeking for a cause of it, in this inward sense. Beauty exists for the same reason that the object which is beautiful exists, or the world in which that object lies, or we that look upon both. It is an experience : there is nothing more to say about it. Indeed, if we look at things teleologically, and as they ultimately justify themselves to the heart, beauty is of all things what least calls for explanation. For matter and space and time and principles of reason and of evolution, all are ultimately brute, unaccountable data. We may describe what actually is, but it might have been otherwise, and the mystery of its being is as baffling and dark as ever.

But we,—the minds that ask all questions and judge of the validity of all answers,—we are not ourselves independent of this world in which we live. We sprang from it, and our relations in it determine all our instincts and satisfactions. This final questioning and sense of mystery

is an unsatisfied craving which nature has her way of stilling. We ask for reasons only when we are surprised. If we had no expectations we should have no surprises. If our spontaneous thoughts came to run in harmony with the course of nature, if our expectations were then continually fulfilled, the sense of mystery would vanish. We should be incapable of asking why the world existed or had such a nature, just as we are now little inclined to ask why anything is right, but mightily disinclined to give up asking why anything is wrong.

This satisfaction of our reason, due to the harmony between our nature and our experience, is partially realized already. The sense of beauty is its realization. When our senses and imagination find what they crave, when the world so shapes itself or so moulds the mind that the correspondence between them is perfect, then perception is pleasure, and existence needs no apology. A grateful environment is a substitute for happiness. The reason and the heart remain deeply unsatisfied. But the eye finds in nature, and in some supreme achievements of art, constant and fuller satisfaction. For the eye is quick, and seems to have been more docile to the education of life than the heart or the reason of man, and able sooner to adapt itself to the reality. Beauty therefore seems to be the clearest manifestation of perfection, and the best evidence of its possibility. If perfection is, as it should be, the ultimate justification of being, we may understand the ground of the moral dignity of beauty. Beauty is a pledge of the possible conformity between the soul and nature, and consequently a ground of faith in the prevalence of the good.

NOTE

THE passages from Mr. Santayana's works are from the following:

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9. The Self. *R.* IV. pp. 8-10.
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67. On "Esse est percipi." *R.* I. pp. 112-14.
68. Kant. (1) *Egotism*, pp. 54-60; (2) *R.* I. pp. 94-7.
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